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Lectures on the Epistles

For Sundays and the Chief Festivals.

BY

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"Lectures on the Gospels," "On Daniel," "On Leviticus," "On the Apocalypse," "On the Epistle to the Hebrews," etc., etc.

COMPLETE IN TWO VOLUMES.

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PREFACE.

GREAT and glorious is the work of preaching the Gospel of Jesus. There is no higher office on earth. God has made it a part of the organism of His throne for the ministration of salvation to the fallen children of men. As the world in its wisdom lapsed from the knowledge of God, it is His pleasure, through the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe. And so transcendent are the functions thus committed to mortal hands that we cannot look upon them understandingly without shrinking like Moses or crying out in amazement with Isaiah that stammering, sinful beings, such as we, should be charged with duties so solemn and momentous.

But "we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." And when the Holy Spirit impels, and the heavenly fire has touched the heart, and the Church in its faithfulness sanctions and calls, woe to us if we preach not the Gospel!

Forty-and-three years has the writer of these Lectures had practical share in this ministry. Called from humble farm-life to the sowing of the good seed of the Word, coming to it against hindrances hard to surmount, and entering upon it under disadvantages of youthfulness and imperfect equipment, he has been so graciously helped to it, and so well sustained and prospered in it, that, out of gratitude to that good Providence which rules the world, he feels, as he has all through felt, special obligation upon him to exert himself to the utmost in every way to be of the fullest service in this holy office The result has been a life of close and incessant study and toil in the one absorbing endeavor thoroughly to preach the true and unmutilated Gospel of Christ in the best manner within his power.

Nor have his efforts been without recognition and reward. He has had place congenial to his tastes and convictions. He has been upheld in positions furnishing ample stimulation to unremitting exertion to render the pulpit useful and attractive to the average American mind. And in one way or another hundreds of his sermons and discourses, filling volumes on volumes, have found their way into the literature of the Church, and in sundry instances have been republished in other countries and languages. For all this God be praised!

About ten years ago, by urgent solicitation, the writer gave out a full set of *Lectures on the Gospels* for the Sundays and chief festivals of the Church Year. It was then announced that if life and health were spared and sufficient encouragement afforded it would be followed by a corresponding series on the Epistles. That promise, concerning which there has been frequent inquiry, is now redeemed by the presentation of the Lectures here following, thus completing the publication of full sets of discourses from the same hand on the entire curriculum of the regular Pericopes—the first of the kind ever prepared and published in the English language by a Lutheran clergyman.

In issuing these volumes on the Epistles the author has but little to add to what appears in the Preface accompanying the volumes on the Gospels. What was then said respecting the propriety and worth of the system of Lessons accepted and honored by the Church for so many ages, the desirableness of having regard to it in preparations for the pulpit, and the value to families and individual Christians of being able to consult some printed sermon on the Gospel or Epistle for the day when deprived of attendance upon public service, the writer would now the more emphasize as confirmed by another decade of his observation and experience. He

is gratified to know that those remarks, together with the Lectures to which they were prefixed, have been generally approved, and that they have contributed to bring about a growing practical attention to the Church Year in our English congregations. Should these Lectures on the Epistles do as much in the same direction, they will answer one purpose which the author of them holds to be of value as against the viciousness of an entirely free system, which is ever prone to run into licentious sensationalism or general flabbiness. There is strength in order. And as this is true with regard to the construction of each individual sermon, it is also true with regard to the arrangement of them in their relation to the great facts of Christianity and to the circle of topics belonging to a rotund presentation of the Gospel.

It is, perhaps, in the department of the *Epistle* Lessons that the Pericopes are the least regarded in the pulpit. The late Dr. Krauth frequently expressed the opinion that our pastors would deal more with the Pericopes were it not for the difficulty, in many instances, of satisfactorily handling the Epistle Lessons, remarking at the same time that the writer of these Lectures would find much harder work when he came to the Epistles. As a matter of fact, the writer is not conscious of having found the Epistles any harder than the Gospels, or of having been less

successful in popularly treating them for general spiritual edification. Speaking from personal experience, he would say for the encouragement of his brethren that the supposed difficulty is more imaginary than real, and that if our clergy will make earnest and patient trial they are likely to find much greater satisfaction in preaching from the Epistle Lessons than they perhaps have anticipated. The Epistles are certainly not less evangelical than the Gospels, or any less the Word of God. They also abound with doctrinal and practical instruction of the highest moment to enable us to enter into the meaning of the doings and utterances of Christ. And if these Lectures serve to beget and stimulate a wider use of the Epistles as texts, or help to break the way to it for those who have been lacking in the attempt, they will accomplish another valuable end.

But the chief worth of these Lectures must be found in the clearness and faithfulness with which they set forth the Gospel of our blessed Lord and the doctrine of salvation through faith in Him. It matters not for the order of the texts, for the ingenuity, grace, eloquence, and agreeableness of their treatment, or for any other quality, if there is deficiency on this one vital point, for which alone the office of preaching exists. Hence the author has kept

it before him as his supreme aim, to present in place and proportion the true and entire testimony of God, determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ, sacrificed for human sin and living in eternal dominion, as the sole hope of our fallen world. And in so far as these Lectures fail to hold up Christ to the view and faith of men as the true and only Saviour, they fail in everything for which the writer of them has any desire that they should meet with favor.

As a matter of duty and help in the preparation of these Lectures the author has consulted many sermons and commentaries on the Pericopes, both German and Anglican. Nor has he hesitated to appropriate thoughts or general plans which have thus come under his eye when capable of being adapted to his own conceptions and purposes. His controlling idea throughout has been the completest edification of his hearers, believing it to be the preacher's business to do the best he can to make the truth clear and telling in living application to people and things as they exist around him, without straining to display his own wit and capacity to say and do what he supposes has never been said or done before. And whatever criticisms, in any respect, may come against these Lectures, the author of them can plead honest work, with honest intent to fulfil the office of a true preacher of the Word

of life; and he is quite persuaded, moreover, that, by divine grace, he has succeeded according to the measure of his gifts.

With these remarks the writer now commits to the public these new volumes of his pulpit discourses just as they were preached, praying that the Holy Ghost may use them for His own good purposes, and bless them to the spiritual profit of all to whom they may come.

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First Sunday in Advent.

Rom. 13: 11–14: And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.

The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.

Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying:

But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

GOOD Archbishop Leighton compares these words to a morning watch-bell to call men up from their slumbers to the duties of the day. They certainly give the signal for an awaking, and are followed by directions for further activities.

I. My first observation upon them is, that *they are addressed to Christians.* The whole Epistle is written to Christians, to church-members, to "the called of Jesus Christ," to the "beloved of God, called to be saints;" and the text, in its own terms, shows itself to be a word to believers. Paul associates himself with those addressed, and says "we"— "we believed"— "our salvation." They had started in Christianity. They had made confession of faith in Christ, and were on the heavenward way. Paul tells them that their salvation, their ultimate deliverance, was drawing near. This could not be true except of Christians. Salvation belongs to none but those

who believe in Christ and confess Him as their Lord and Saviour; neither is it drawing near them that believe not. Between the unbeliever and salvation there is a great gulf fixed, which is impassable from either side so long as such unbelief continues. Salvation is no nearer to them at one time than at another. Days, years, and scores of years may come and go, but when they have rolled by, if a man is still in unbelief, salvation is no nearer to him than at the beginning. If anything, it is farther off, for he has become the more incrusted in sin, more habituated to disregard of God and his soul, and more callous to the operations of grace. Where the Holy Spirit is resisted and repelled by an unbelieving heart, it recedes, and leaves the man farther from God and heaven than before. It cannot, therefore, be of unbelievers that the apostle uses this language.

If people are not Christ's disciples, they are of course in a state of spiritual stupor and sleep—nay, worse, they are "dead in trespasses and sins"—but they are in no sense nearer to heaven as time passes away. They need to be awakened out of sleep, and to bestir themselves with great earnestness in order to be saved; but they cannot date back to a time when they believed and say that their salvation is nearer now than it was then. They may be close about the gates of mercy and forgiveness. They may even touch them and look through them. But so long as they remain outside salvation is not theirs, neither is it coming any nearer to them. An old sinner is no closer to salvation than a young sinner;

and so long as any one has not come to faith he is not among those whose salvation is nearer than when they believed. Hence the text is spoken especially to professed Christians—to people who have embraced the Gospel and stand in the attitude of believers. Not to observe this would be to miss much of the point and force of the apostle's words. Applying them to outsiders, unbelievers, and mere stupefied worldlings, we would leave out the very persons who are pre-eminently in the apostle's mind and view, and so fail of the benefit which the admonition was meant to be to us. And if any one here present thinks himself or herself a Christian, a believer, a member of Christ's Church, let it be understood that the address of the text is first of all and especially to you.

II. My next observation upon this text is, that *even Christian and believing people are apt to be dull and sleepy in their religion, and need waking up.* Even in the apostle's times, when Jewish and heathen persecutions were so bitter and bloody as to keep Christians greatly stirred up, many of them nevertheless were dull and sluggish. Though things were so warm for them and the conflict so intense that we can hardly see how it was possible for them to sleep, yet they did sleep, and were so deep in their slumbers that the holy apostle found it necessary to address them in words of reproach and sharp rebuke.

And if such was the case amid the heat of trial and suffering for the Gospel's sake, how much more likely are we to have such a state of things among the Christians and church-people of our day!

It has become somewhat popular and respectable for the better classes of people to have something of a Christian belief or profession—some connection with the Church. Not to be baptized, not to hold to some form of Christian profession, is, in most circles, held and felt to be something of a reproach, something that ought not to be. It detracts somewhat from one's standing among the more serious and approved portions of the community. The general sentiment is adverse to the irreligious who ignore church and mock at the rites and ordinances of Christianity. They have their friends, of course, but they cannot command the same respect and sympathy which they otherwise might have. Hence the weight of influence now is toward making people Christians. Feelings and convictions in favor of Christianity and the Christian profession are thus aided and furthered by the sentiments of a large and respectable part of society. And there is at the same time also such a softening and letting down of the line of demarcation between the Church and the world, and such a bringing of the ways, fashions, and ideas of the world into the Church, and the securement of membership and Christian recognition is so easy, that the great mass of our modern professors and church-members are Christians in a very mild degree.

The early believers had to wander in deserts and mountains, and find their resting-places in dens and caves of the earth. Because of their religion they had to endure mockings and scourgings, bonds and imprisonments, being often destitute, afflicted, tormented. Hence they had to have a strong and vig-

orous faith before they would allow themselves to be known as Christians. And when they thus took up the cross they were not likely to sink off into spiritual slumbers. But now the ways are so nicely carpeted and warmed and shaded, the associations are so pleasant and agreeable, and such flowery and sumptuous beds of ease spread all along, and the spirit of temporal comfort and self-indulgence is so much the spirit of the Church itself, that it is no easy thing any more for a Christian, however sincere and earnest, to avoid sinking off here and there and going sound asleep in all the senses and activities of right Christianity. The result is that the churches in general have a very drowsy and sleepy set of Christians to show. Everything touching religious duty and activity is too hard for them, and there is scarcely a thing from which they will not try to excuse themselves. Half the time they neglect their prayers, or go through them in the most vacant and perfunctory manner, thinking of anything on earth rather than of what they are doing. The slightest excuse or imaginary indisposition keeps them away from public worship, and often when they do come it is with such simpering listlessness that they go home with more complainings of the preacher, or more preoccupied with what this one said or did or wore, or with some failure or other here or there which half angers them for a month, totally oblivious to any thought or feeling of having laid their prayers and alms on God's altar, or to any lessons learned from God's holy Word. And when it comes to work for the Church, enterprise for its upbuilding and extension, labor in

its interests, and giving of their substance to sustain it, oh dear! a thousand things are in the way, and it is just a misery to be thus everlastingly dunned and dingdonged at and never let alone!

And what does all this really mean? Why, it means just what Paul found in the tendency already in his day—a drowsy faith, if indeed any such thing as real faith is left. People are asleep, and they don't want to be disturbed. Their religion, if they have any, is draggy and next thing to dead. And if Paul had occasion to reproach and rebuke the Christians at Rome for their sleepiness and languor, what would he say if he should come into some of our modern churches? Yea, what would he be compelled to say of us who make up this congregation? Just think a little, my friends, and see what he would be likely to say of you.

III. My third observation on this text is, that *it is very necessary for sleepy Christians to be shaken and stirred up to wakefulness.* The clear indication of the apostle is that such a drowsy, sluggish, and inert religion will not answer. The soul indulged in such spiritual stagnation will die out in all the elements of genuine godliness. If death and judgment should overtake people in this dull and do-nothing piety, what hope have they of sharing the rewards of good and faithful servants? Paul tried to get such drowsy souls awake. To this end he used all his apostolic authority and made his words very pointed and plain. He certainly knew what was needed, and that unless they were aroused to a better and more lively devotion they would certainly suffer. He was not the

man to disturb them in their easy quiet if he had not deemed it necessary to their spiritual hopes and their prospects for eternity. And if *he* deemed it necessary to have them waked up, it *was* necessary; and if necessary for *them*, it is equally necessary for all who are in like condition. This easy-going and self-indulgent religion will not suffice. It may get us the name and repute of being Christians on earth, but it will not get us the rewards of Christians in eternity. Our religious convictions and beliefs may be good and true, our experiences may be genuine, our hearts may be sincere; but when people begin to consult with flesh and blood, and bring in worldly and selfish interests over against an earnest and active devotion in all good works, and give up to indulge and pet their carnal ease and convenience, and begin to expend on show, waste, gayeties, vanities, and worldly follies what they owe to God and His cause, they give Satan the upper hand, and will certainly make shipwreck of their faith and their salvation if the Circean spell be not broken and their souls aroused to a more wakeful and vigilant condition and a more lively religious sensibility.

Sleep is good in its place and time, and it is a great comfort of God that we have pillows on which to rest our oft-weary heads; but when a man's religion is allowed to go into drowsiness, inaction, and indifference, and a Christian consents to lay himself down on the couches and cushions of self-indulgence and worldly ease and enjoyment at the expense of his religious fidelity, he is giving his head to a pillow dripping with the blood of souls, and adventuring

into a repose from which many are never waked except by the scorching touch of perdition's fires. Yea, when Christian people, though they be sincere and believing, make themselves easy in their religion, and slacken off in duty here and there, and let the urgency of the case fade from their consciences, and are at no pains to know just where they stand as to a living and growing faith, and their attention to church and church duties is languid, irregular and conditioned to their own sweet convenience, and feel more alive and delighted in the gay company and frivolities of social enjoyment than in the sanctuary and the exercises of piety, and let their prayers and their Bibles drop because they have used up their time and strength with other cares or things they like better, and but for the name would be as well satisfied to give God's sacred time to their selfish pleasures,—they are surely on the way to spiritual death. They are asleep in their religion, and need to awake if they are not to get their portion with hypocrites and unbelievers.

IV. Let me remark, then, in the fourth place, upon *what the apostle means by this urged awaking out of sleep.* The instrument or agency in the case is the Word of God. He addressed these people on the subject, spoke to them, admonished them, and told them of the dangers and necessities of their situation; and what he spoke was by inspiration of the Spirit. It was therefore by the holding up to them God's truth, plying them with the divine Word, that he calculated on getting them awake and bringing them to a right self-consciousness. Nor was

there then any other way of doing it. Neither is there any other way of doing it now. People must be told of their defects, dangers, and unsatisfactory condition. They must be admonished, warned, rebuked, and argued with out of the divine Word and its requirements. The pulpit must speak, and people must speak with one another—not in the way of harsh accusation, but in the spirit of love and faithfulness—to gain attention to the matter, to get careless and drowsy ones a-thinking, and to bring things home to their hearts and consciences. Providences come in to help, and often strike very severe and stunning blows, and then is the time for the Word to work and animate to new resolves and more faithful endeavors. It is the rod that arouses the erring and disobedient child, and makes him remember wherein he forgot, and disposes him in his tears and softenings to be more mindful of the father's voice and word. And so drowsy Christians must be made to hear and feel what they do not like, that through what is bitter to their taste and disturbing to their comfort they may be brought to their right senses.

As to the awaking itself, there can be no misunderstanding when we know the nature of the sleep. The image is also so homely and familiar to every one that we can very readily make the application.

The first thing in getting sleeping people awake is to get their eyes open; and it is the same in spiritual awakening. When Christ commissioned the apostle Paul, He said, "I send thee to open their eyes." People cannot dream themselves into heaven; they must get their eyes open to see, and to direct them-

selves accordingly. And when a man is really awakened from the sleep and stupor of sin, a new world breaks upon his vision. He sees what he did not see before—sees with other eyes, and finds out just where he is and what a dreamy and unreal life he was living. He sees and knows now what did not seem to exist until he got his eyes open. Even what he did know takes on a new complexion, and everything sacred comes to him with an urgency and power of which he had no previous consciousness.

And with the opening of his eyes comes an awakening of his affections. Seeing things as they are, his heart is touched, his fears are alarmed, anxious disturbance stirs in his soul, feeling returns to him, and his whole being begins to warm and flame with thoughts and impulses for his safety. A house may be on fire, but if the man within is asleep it is all the same to him as if everything were safe; but when his eyes open to the reality and the danger, then the heart springs and beats against the walls of its enclosure, and thrills the whole nature with terror and concern to save his life. And when he thus has his senses open and his true situation flashed upon his soul, he cannot help moving and doing with the utmost speed and energy what he now sees and feels to be necessary to his security. All the dreams and follies of his sleeping hours he instantly casts off. All the means of protection he can lay his hands on he eagerly grasps. And everything that belongs to an earnest and vigorous activity to get himself away from the place of danger he puts forth with a

will and courage before unprecedented. Thus the man is awake, and shows the vigor, sense, and will of one awake.

And so it must be with drowsy and sleepy Christians. They may growl at us for disturbing their easy-going quiet, but we must thunder the Word into their dull ears, bang and knock at their doors, and raise all the racket about them in our power, that we may get them to open their eyes and see the folly and falsity of their pleasant dreams, realize their peril, and take the needed action for their safety. And when sleepy and drowsy Christians thus get their eyes open, and behold where they are, and begin to see and feel the momentous and pressing need of a more earnest, prompt and faithful devotion, and set themselves vigorously to all their duty, then are they awake in the sense of the waking out of sleep of which the apostle here speaks.

V. The fifth and last thing I would have you observe on this text is, *the motive which the apostle urged upon these people*. The presentation is a little peculiar, and not such as we might expect; but it is very comprehensive and very moving if rightly conceived. The apostle contemplates this present mortal life, in which Christ came to visit man, as a period of night-time. It is *day* as compared with the time before the Gospel came, but still it is *night* in comparison with what is yet to come when the present dispensation has run its course and the resurrection morning dawns. Salvation is offered to us now; and if we have faith to believe the Word, and to embrace Christ as the great and only Saviour, that salvation

is ours. But it is as yet only a salvation of hope, and not of full fruition. It lifts us out of the condemnation of sin, but it does not yet do away with sin. It brings us the light of life and immortality, but it is only as the light of lamps or distant stars, which has to struggle with a far-reaching and all-affecting darkness. We know only in part and see only "as through a glass darkly," and are left to contend with disabling imperfections of all sorts. And we are so continually beset with error, weakness, sin and tribulation on earth that "if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." But there is a better day coming—a day of completed "*salvation*" so exalted and glorious that the most blessed experiences of the saints now are scarce worthy of being called salvation; a day which is sure to come, and can no more fail than heaven and earth can cease to be; a day which is more certain to come than anything else that we can contemplate in the future. It is not the day of death, for death is night and not day; nor can any true Christian count certainly on dying. When Christ comes the saints then living will never die at all; and Christ may come before the time for any of us to die. That great salvation day is the day when our dear Saviour shall come a second time without sin unto salvation; and of that we are made infallibly sure by the word of Christ and all His inspired apostles. There is nothing that is more sure and certain. It is indeed the one thing above all other things that is absolutely certain. All revelation, all holy promise, all hope for man, must perish and pass for naught if Christ

does not come again as He was seen going up into heaven. And that coming, and the wonders which it is to bring with it, the apostle calls "our salvation," the glorious day-time as over against this present night. It is *salvation*, because then every bond and shackle of sin, and of every consequence of sin, will be for ever broken and stricken off from the bodies and the souls of them that believe in Jesus and cleave to Him as their Saviour; and it will be *day*, because then all veils shall be taken away, all clouds scattered, all darkness dissipated, and the Sun of Righteousness, full orbed, shall arise, with no obstructions left to obscure the brightness of His everlasting light.

Most people contemplate that day with alarm and terror. They dislike to think of it. They would rather never hear it mentioned, and would feel relieved if they could persuade themselves that it will never come. And to them that know not God and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ it will be an ill day indeed—the worst of days; a day which they can by no means escape or withstand; a day of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversary. But what the natural heart so dreads, and may well dread above all things, is the chief joy and blessedness of Christ's people. It is their redemption day—their salvation day; the day that is to fulfil to them all their glad hopes and all their anxious prayers; the day of the great Hallel of the ransomed creation, which all this while is travailing together in pain, looking and yearning for that grand redemption-time. The whole present work of the Holy Ghost on our souls is simply our

sealing unto that day of redemption. It is the true goal of all our Christian life and endeavors, which is described as a looking for and hasting unto that day of the Lord Jesus.

Let me assure you, dear friends, out of the very heart of God's everlasting Gospel, that, much as you may dislike to think of that day, and much as you may tremble when you do think of it, it is the most blessed of days—the crown and consummation of all other days and all other blessings. Everything that we can possibly hold most dear and precious as Christians then comes to its proper height and fulness. It is the grand opening day of the everlasting kingdom, filled with all the unspeakable treasures which our Lord has purchased with His blood and has gone to put in readiness for our eternal possession. It is the day when all our disabilities and sins shall drop off for ever, and death will be swallowed up in victory, and crowns of gold shall adorn these brows, and we shall take our places with the angels and the immortal principalities, to suffer no more, and die no more, and sorrow no more for ever. In a word, it is our "*salvation*."

And that salvation is now coming very close to them that believe and are alive to its coming. The dates, so far as man can reckon them up, are all about run out. Everything admonishes us that we may now expect it any year, any month, any day, any hour. We know not when it will come. "The times and the seasons God hath reserved in His own power." We may not fix the time or say when it will be, for God has not told us, and no man knoweth.

But it is everywhere spoken of as imminent and liable to come at any moment. And hence the word for every generation is to watch and keep in readiness, not knowing at what hour our Lord shall come. Paul anticipated that it might be even in his day. He counted the years, and with every new one he thought it would perhaps be the last. These Christians at Rome had become such within but a few years, yet he pressed upon them the thought that now it was nearer than when they first believed. And now that eighteen hundred years more have passed, how very much nearer is it than it was then! And because the great salvation was so rapidly coming he appealed to them to arouse themselves, awake to living earnestness in their religion, and cast off all sluggishness and all works of darkness. What if that day should come and find them sleeping? How could they afford to let such transcendent treasures of their profession slip? The time being now so short and uncertain, how should they be aroused and quickened to every zealous and holy activity! Thus by the certainty and increasing nearness and impendency of the Lord's coming he sought to awaken them into readiness and constant expectancy, lest that day should come upon them unawares. And if there is anything on earth to make men feel and think and bestir themselves as people who really expect to be saved, it is this of the certain nearness of the great day of deliverance and salvation, when the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised, and we shall be changed from mortal to immortality.

And what, dear friends, if this new year of grace should bring that day? Where would it find us? Is it not full time that we should awake out of sleep? Should not the time past suffice us for the working of the will of the Gentiles? These works of darkness,—has there not been enough of them? With the thunders of the great day sounding in our ears, is it not high time to hush the voice of carnal strife and set ourselves to put on the Lord Jesus, that we may be found dressed and arrayed in His righteousness?

Beware, my soul; beware, beware,
Lest thou in slumber lie,
And, like the five, remain without,
And knock and vainly cry;
But watch, and bear thy lamp undimmed,
And Christ shall gird thee on
His own bright wedding-robe of light—
The glory of the Son.

Second Sunday in Advent.

ROM. 15:4–13: For whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.

Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers: and that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name.

And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people.

And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people.

And again Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

T is a glad note that is sounded in this text. What we need in this world is *hope*. Everything here is so unstable and disappointing, and the outlook in the natural course of things is so sad, doubtful, and uncertain, that it is good news to hear of some movement or doing which is adequate to give us hope—good, substantial, reliable hope. And of such a movement the apostle

here tells. From the beginning God has spoken. He has also caused His Word to be written, preserved it till now, and brought it to our knowledge and attention, that we might have patience and comfort amid the darkness and trials of this mortal life, and from His own explanations of things have a confident, steady, and peaceful hope. Let us see, then, how this is, especially in relation to the great themes of the impending Advent of our Lord with which the Church has connected this Epistle Lesson.

I. Looking around us on human society, we are saddened to see everything so much out of joint, weak, sickly, and unsatisfactory. Even what is good and divine, by reason of the ignorance and depravities of men does not get on in any degree to assure confidence as to the ultimate outcome. Humanity's best and greatest efforts from the beginning have been just so many endeavors to right things into something of bearable order. But remedies only multiply wants and defects. For every head of the great hydra of evil cut off, two spring up in its place. The best-planned institutions and the wisest laws are ever and anon disappointing their authors. The holy law of God itself is "weak through the flesh." Men have been working at reforms ever since the world began, but every new attempt has added to the demonstration that, so far as lies in human strength and wisdom, "that which is crooked cannot be made straight, and that which is wanting cannot be numbered." After six thousand years of effort and experimenting, tyranny, oppression, misrule, injustice, and mal-administration are everywhere. "Wars and

fightings," always the fruit of wicked lust and passion, devastate the nations and threaten at any time to run riot over the earth. Rapine and murder and deceit drive their foul trade in all lands. Ambition, selfishness, intrigue, finesse, and corruption hold disgraceful sway in the best legislatures, senates, parliaments, and cabinets that exist. The world abounds ever more and more with filthy dreamers, defiling the flesh, despising dominion, speaking evil of dignities, railing against things which they do not understand, and corrupting themselves and others in those things which they know naturally as brute beasts. With all the progress of the Church and the light of Christianity, scoffers multiply on all sides, walking after their own lusts, and denying the only Lord God that bought them with His blood. People clamor for liberty and enthrone lawlessness—overthrow the old landmarks and find themselves at sea without chart or compass, to drift no one knows whither. On the earth is "distress of nations with perplexity," and in the heavens portents of disaster.

We contemplate the facts. We remember the failures and disappointments that continually befall our own most earnest and hopeful endeavors and calculations. And we wonder, Is this always to be? Is there nothing better to come? Must we be for ever mocked by these inborn aspirations that ever rise and never find their goal? Is there no hope? Thanks to God, a writing has been made for our learning whose office it is to explain the oppressive mystery that we may have hope.

Not from the philosophy of man, but solely from

the revelation of God, do we find the true solution; and it is not at all what we might think. This is a doomed world. Its destiny is to perish—to go down under the weight of its own corruptions. Whatever men may dream and preach about progress and improvement, there is no hope for it. The decree has gone forth, and all the symptoms prove that it must eventually succumb to judgment, as did the old world in Noah's time. There is to be a better order, but it can only come through a baptism of fire, to which the world that now is is reserved. A day of redemption draweth nigh, but it is not a redemption evolved by the reforms, preachings, and legislation of man. It is a redemption which cometh from above—brought by the coming again of the Lord Jesus in power and great glory. Having gone into a far country to receive a kingdom, He is to return with it, and by the hand of His almightiness to sweep out everything antagonistic and re-enact a new genesis upon this earth. There must come a dissolution first; and this is the true Christian consolation, that "according to His promise we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

II. We look again at the fabric of nature around us, and we find it as ailing and disjointed as the affairs of human society. It once was "very good," but the convulsions of sin have reduced it to a sad predicament. The garden which was fitted up for the home of immortals has become a place of elemental disorders, uninhabitable except for a few brief years, and everywhere scarred with graves. Man disobeyed his Maker, and his disobedience

brought all sorts of disturbance. The soul rebelled against God and the flesh revolted against the spirit, and the whole external creation became unruly and resentful at having a convict for its lord. There is much that is lovely, but it is loveliness marred with many distresses. There is much that is majestic and venerable, but it is inwrought with signs of deep, mysterious ailment. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain until now." The sighing and moaning are in every breeze, the sadness is mingled with every scene, a sorrowful *miserere* rises from all quarters. Is it to be always so? Is there no hope to light this desolation? Ay, there is a writing written for our learning, that through it we might have hope. Therein is written the heavenly word, "Behold, I make all things new." There are "times of the restitution of all things" spoken of by all the holy prophets since the world began. Nature itself seems to have taken in the promise; "for the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revelation of the sons of God—in hope that itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God." As far as the curse has gone, so far the promised redemption is to reach. If the curse is upon the ground, it must be lifted off. If it is upon the products of the earth, in its climates, its configurations, its elements, it must be done away; for the writing is, "There shall be no more curse." Then this earth must again become a Paradise; this field of blood and graves be brought out of its long desolations; this lazar-house transformed into the

sweetness of the original smile of its Creator. But when shall these times of "refreshing" and "restitution" come? The same holy records tell us, "When He shall send Jesus Christ," who is now in heaven.

III. We look again at the history and condition of the Church. For more than eighteen centuries has she now been in the world. She has lived through all her varied trials, and has been blessed with many successes, for which we never can be too thankful. But when her great Founder created her, He said to all her members, "In the world ye shall have tribulation." And so she has ever been bearing the cross, oppressed with privations, anxieties, toils, and perils of battle with error, with sin, with depravity, with corruption, with hoary superstition, with relentless unbelief, selfishness, and carnal greed and passion. In every age the blood of her champions has been made to flow, while her children have had to wrestle with endless hardships and trials. Never a victory was won but the warfare was renewed in other forms, the struggle rendered more desperate, and the foe found more subtle and more resolved. From the crucifixion of her Lord till now she has been drinking the bitter waters of affliction, ever tasked to her utmost, and crying out under adversities and burdens from which there is no deliverance. To-day, with all the widespread show of numbers, the professed Church is largely as much in need of conversion and regeneration as the world itself. All kinds of ills, errors, defections, and departures from the only saving faith are eating at her life, soiling her garments, weaken-

ing her strength, and destroying her power. Human society may have in it more Christians than ever before, but it also has more infidels, more unbelievers, more hypocrites, more empty formalists, more false professors. We have only to listen and read to observe the shoutings of her enemies that her batteries are growing feeble, her faith undermined, her strength failing, and all her apostolic features doomed to be swept away before the coming revolutions in human thought. Is it to be so always? Is there no hope? Ay, turn to the writing made for our learning, and see the star of promise over all this scene of conflict and disheartenment.

You have heard the story of the maiden whose lover went on a voyage to the Holy Land, and remained away so long that he was reported dead. You remember how she continued to believe that he was still alive and would in due time return, and kindled a beacon-fire on the beach to signal to the vessel that should bring him to her, and nightly took her station by that watch-fire, looking out across the dusky Mediterranean with sad and tremulous longing for him on whom her heart was set. See in that story a parable. That maiden is the Church. That lover is Jesus. That Holy Land is heaven. That report of his death is the teaching of unbelief and cold-hearted skepticism. That watch-fire is the flame of love and "blessed hope" fed by the midnight ministrations of waiting faithfulness. That scene beyond is the misty future. The darkness, the bleak rocks, the rolling waters are natural reason's discouragements to a steadfast faith. Age after age,

through all the night of her affliction, hath that noble maiden stood by her love-lit fire, bending forward to hail *His* coming who has pledged to make her His happy bride. And, true as the writings given for our learning, she shall not be disappointed. Jesus has promised, "Behold, I come quickly;" and He will fulfil what He has said. Some of these nights, while the world lies wrapped in its carnal slumbers, dreaming of security and laughing at the maiden on the shore, a Form shall rise over the surging waves, as once on Galilee, calling from the dim distance, "It is I; be not afraid." And from the anxious watchers shall arise the shout, "Lo! this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for Him; we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation!" As the coming of Havelock to the relief of Lucknow during the terrible Sepoy rebellion, so when the extremity is greatest, and the confidence of many has died out, and the last hopes are ready to expire, a sudden outcry shall fill all ears, and the faint ones shall start from their sorrowful prostration, and earnest hearts bend forward with eager gaze, till every soul thrills with the blessed consciousness, "We are saved! we are saved!"

IV. We look again at the melancholy condition of things in this world in relation to the reign of death. We hardly begin to live until we begin to die. Many tyrants have borne rule on earth, and some whose empires were counted universal, but never has there been a shadow of such a tyranny as the reign of death. For six thousand years has it

held sway, and but two individuals of all the race have had exemption from its power. Its subjects mingle with the dust of every clime and slumber in the hidden depths of every sea. More than a hundred generations have gone down under its dark dominion, without one representative left. The young, the beautiful, and the good, as well as the aged, the repulsive, and the wicked, have had alike to bow to the black sceptre of this inexorable king. "Your fathers, where are they? The prophets, do they live for ever?" By the time we get our children educated, and people gathered into the Church as disciplined workers for God and His cause, they sicken and die. Daily the thought is pressed upon us that somewhere in the near future there is a grave awaiting every one of us. Alas, alas, for the ravages of death! All earth's population is but one vast chain-gang on the way to the silent land—to the house appointed for all living. With hushed voices and delicate steps we walk the gardens of the dead, and stand by the mouth of the open grave committing neighbors and loved ones to the ground, "earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust." We wonder, Shall it be always so? Is this grinding tyranny which eats the flesh and gnaws the bones of men, and dissolves every earthly relationship, however close or tender, never to be broken? Must the living always be hearing the clods rattle on the coffin-lids of their friends, with no better hope than that they must presently come to the same sad end? We ask of all the wisdom of this world, and it has nothing to answer, no hope to give.

We turn to the writings made for our learning. We search those records for comfort, if comfort can be found. And we are not left to sorrow as those who have no hope. From the depths of eternity there sounds a voice, clear and unmistakable, "Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God!" "O death, I will be thy plague! O grave, I will be thy destruction!" "And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain!" Yea, saith the apostle, "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds; and so shall we be ever with the Lord." And "then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory!"

There is to come a clarion-call, thrilling through all the resting-places of the dead, at which rocky vaults and sepulchres shall burst, and family tombs shall open, and the dingy doors of the grave swing back, and daylight penetrate the dark domain of the departed, and all the children of faith shake off their damp and mouldy prison-garbs and bid farewell for ever to the clodded cells which have clasped their mortal forms so long. Patriarchs from Machpelah's cave, and holy martyrs whose dust and ashes the winds and waters have carried over the earth, and faithful missionaries whose bodies sleep in foreign climes or whose hearts the savages have eaten, and

"slaughtered saints whose bones lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold," and sea-lost loved ones whom shipwreck left to perish on the barren rocks or melt in the unfathomed deep, and the fallen pilgrims for whom the badges of mourning still mark the souls and bodies of their bereaved survivors—that son who fills the stranger's grave in other lands; that brother rolled into the trench where no index marks his resting-place; that cherub child that slumbers in its little grassy bed; that friend, dearer than life, whose grave has learned to know so well the footsteps of the sorrowing ones coming there to weep,—all shall start up again, arrayed in the glories of their risen Lord. Yea, from the ashes of all the holy dead shall blossom the living flowers of immortality. "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with Him."

V. We look again at the long waiting of the saints for their rewards. Have you ever thought, dear friends, of the sublimities of the Christian's calling? Have you ever tried to sum up in imagination all that the Scriptures tell of the honors and glories held out to us in the promises? I fear God's people do not half realize what is intended for them, or for what they are intended. They talk of being saved—if only they can be so fortunate as to get to heaven. But a poor, meagre, and crippled conception is that. We are not called simply to be saved from sin and its consequences. We are called and intended for positions and dignities. We are called to be kings and priests of God and of Christ, to bear sceptres of

royal dominion, and to "reign for ever and ever." He who is faithful unto death is to have regal honor; he is to wear "a crown." The word of the Saviour is, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on His throne." With sublime anticipations the apostle exclaims, "Know ye not that we shall judge angels? Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" What all of glory and authority may be involved in these things we cannot yet fully know, but they open out a transcendent destiny to the people of God. But how sad the contrast between that and our situation in this world! Paul wished to God that the Christians of his time "did reign," that he and his fellow-apostles "might reign with them;" but instead of this he could only lament that they were as if "appointed unto death" and "made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men." Instead of judging and reigning, he was dragged from tribunal to tribunal, and, helpless before each, could only say, "Now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers." It has ever been so. This is "man's day," and the God-children are at a discount. Always in the minority, the world at large respects them but little, and disdains to accept their doctrines and testimony. In so far as true to their faith and hopes, the feeling is that they are too severe on its philosophies—too much depreciate the interests of this world; that they are in the way of its liberties —would draw a cowl over its joys—would hinder its progress; that they are mere *pessimists*—morbific

prophets of evil; in a word, that they are an intolerable, leprous, croaking set, fit only to be killed off, and at best undeserving of serious regard. If the world can find a Balaam ready to compromise himself for gold, to bless it for a price, to speak God's benediction on its lusts and passions, him will it honor, and to him will Balak's nobles come; but for the Elijahs, Isaiahs, Jeremiahs, Peters, and Pauls, their fate has ever been to be mocked, scourged, imprisoned, sawn asunder, slain with the sword, nailed to the cross, thrown to wild beasts, or compelled to seek asylum in deserts, mountains, and dens and caves of the earth, being destitute, tormented, afflicted, neglected, because they condemn the godless world, its Ahabs, its Jezebels, its Herods, and its sins. The general verdict of mankind, sustained by what has mostly governed for the past six thousand years, is against the faith and profession of the saints and prophets and apostles of God. The congregation of earnest believers has ever been as a little flock hunted by the wolves. To this day and hour the world brands their profession as mere hallucination and lies. Is this the reward of righteousness? Has God been deceiving us with these promises of regency and eternal princedoms? Were the gold-crowned elders and living ones mistaken when they sung their thanks to God for making them kings and priests, ordained to "reign over the earth"? Are these mere figures of speech? When Jehovah promises crowns, does He not mean crowns and all that crowns symbolize and represent? When He proposes thrones and dominions as the rewards of His

servants, does He not mean realities? Is there no time to come when all these promises shall be fulfilled?

Turn we to the writing made for our learning, we are left to no uncertainty. Not *here*, not *now*, not in this present world, but "*when the Chief Shepherd shall appear* ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." Paul's earthly life was one continual fight of afflictions, but when he came to the end of his course, having kept the faith, he could look up with ineffable satisfaction and say, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me *at that day;* and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing."

Not without comfort and rest and goodly fellowship with their Saviour are the souls who have gone hence in the Lord. Lazarus is "in Abraham's bosom." Paul is "with Christ, which is far better" than anything to be had in this world. And all the toiling and oft-weary saints who have fallen asleep "do rest from their labors." But none of them have yet been crowned, nor do they yet reign. Even the souls of the martyrs still cry under the altar, "How long, O Lord, how long?" till the blessed Lord Jesus comes "to give reward unto the prophets and saints and them that fear God, small and great." When the multitudinous man-child is born into resurrection life, we shall come to dominion, fulfilling that vision of John: "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judging-power was given unto them, and they lived again, and reigned with Christ."

Dear friends, if we be indeed God's people we need not despond nor despair in any condition of things in this world. Dark and sad and unmanageable as they may be, the sacred writings show the way out, and by their blessed teachings lift us quite above all disturbing apprehension. What is there to dim or cloud one's outlook or break down the confidence of him who has rightly embraced the Christian's hope? God's holy oracles, written for our learning, if only we search out and embrace their presentations, afford ample antidote for every unmanning fear. What though the sun be darkened, and the moon refuse to give her light, and the stars be shaken from their settings, and the earth be filled with national commotions and distresses, and the seas become tumultuous, and the hearts of worldly men fail them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth, and the powers of the heavens be shaken, and all this nether world be ready to go to-pieces? It is God's method to make darkness the way to light, death the prelude to life, and confusion and disaster the road to order and glory. The most hopeful time is when things seem most untoward and threatening. It is the stir upon the face of dark waters that gives prognostic of the breaking forth of light and life and beauty. And so the Saviour says, "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." The judgment day is the Christian's coronation day. The dooms-day of the world is the beginning of the Church's jubilee. The lava-streams that pour out in ruinous desolation

before the feet of Him who cometh to judge the earth make the beds for fairer and richer fields, amid whose fruits and flowers the undying generations thereafter shall sing their happy songs. And what if we must wait and toil and suffer now? No lasting harm or loss can ever come of it, but all the greater glory and everlasting gain.

Every ship carries an anchor, so that when tempestuous weather comes it may be let down through the dark waves to the firm bottom of the sea, as a hold against being driven and dashed to pieces. And such an instrument every one may find in "the hope set before us in the Gospel; which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast." Its arms and flukes take hold on the eternal continent. Its cable is woven of the imperishable truths of God. And the soul that trusts to it shall never be overwhelmed.

Eternal Hope!
When, wrapped in fire, the realms of ether glow,
And Heaven's last thunder shakes the world below,
Thou, undismayed, shalt o'er the ruins smile,
And light thy torch at Nature's funeral pile.

Third Sunday in Advent.

1 Cor. 4 : 1–5 : Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.

Moreover, it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful.

But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self.

For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.

Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.

IT was a malady of the old Greek commonwealths that there was a constant tendency to factious and bigoted clans. The same also appeared in the early Greek churches, particularly in the one planted by Paul in the city of Corinth. Quick at learning, these people speedily attained a wealth of spiritual gifts and scriptural knowledge for which the apostle specially commends them. But their steadfastness and continuance in progress were not so satisfactory. They presently became too learned, especially in their own conceits —undertook to judge and decide in matters beyond their sphere, and hence fell into the common vice of their race, separating into antagonistic parties and suffering their religious zeal to run into a factious enthusiasm for this or that particular man. There

soon was a Paul faction, an Apollos faction, a Peter faction, and a Christ faction. These and other consequent irregularities called forth the apostle's displeasure, and drew from him certain letters in which he chides them as fleshly and carnal, and needing to go back and learn over again the true spirit of the religion which they had been led to profess. He finds special fault with them for their manner of judging between the ministers of Christ, and of exalting one over against the other as heads of so many different schools. And it is in connection with this point that the words now before us occur, in which we find a brief account—

I. Of what ministers are, and what is required of them;

II. Of the way Paul felt with regard to men's judgments of him;

III. Of the manner in which Christians in general should order their thinking and behavior.

I.

Ministers; what are they, and what is demanded of them? Or, as the apostle himself puts the question, "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos?" What account are we to take of them? and in what light are they to be considered? The text gives the answer. The Corinthians had been influenced by very superficial and partisan judgments in the case, and the apostle here delivers what is the true judgment, the well-weighed and proper estimate, upon which all should religiously rely.

1. They belong to Christ. It is not for them to

be setting up schools and factions, rallying under their own names. They are all members of one family, of which there is but one Head, and that Head is Jesus. Paul does not belong to the Paul party, nor Apollos to the Apollos party, nor Peter to the Peter party, but all together belong to the Lord Jesus, who bought them by His blood, adopted them as His children, and made them members of His house.

2. They are the servants of Christ. The word in the original (ὑπηρετας) is a nautical term. It denotes the crew of a ship, under-rowers. The Church is conceived of as a vessel, of which Christ is the Pilot, and all His ministers rowers under His command. They are so subordinate to Him that they can do nothing and be nothing, in their ministerial character, except as He gives the word. Separate lords and leaders, founders of schools and parties in their own name, they could not be. The very highest of them were servants, in a very subordinate relation to Christ, and nothing more than servants. It is, indeed, a very great and high thing to be a servant of Christ, to be called to row the ship of salvation, to be entrusted with the working of the oars that propel the vessel of which Jesus is the Owner and Pilot; but it is a thing wholly inconsistent with what these Corinthians sought to make of Paul, Apollos, and Cephas. Not even apostles or apostolic men are independent heads and leaders. They are all under-workmen, hand-laborers, dependent servants, who must look to Jesus for their authority and their orders for all they undertake or do. And the more

completely their own wills and plans are sunk in His will, and the more their own seeking is sacrificed to His glory, the more fully do they answer to their position as apostles, evangelists, pastors, and teachers of the Church.

3. They are "stewards of the mysteries of God." All the high things relating to our salvation, which no man can know but by revelation of God, and which God hath made known in His holy Word, have been committed to them, to be dispensed, according to God's orders, to those for whose good they are intended. The wonderful plan of divine grace, with all the requisites to its execution, in awakening the sleeping, enlightening the benighted, reconciling the sinful to God, and begetting, strengthening, and confirming a life of faith and obedience, have been entrusted to them as God's stewards, ministering in His name and for the perfecting of His house in all heavenly wisdom and attainment. They are, indeed, the divinely-appointed organs of His gracious purposes, sent to minister to men His manifold grace, instructing them, turning them away from their sins, building them up in righteousness, comforting their consciences against the fears of death and hell, and establishing them in the peace and blessedness of everlasting life. The Word of truth they are to divide, explain, and inculcate, giving to each his portion in due season, to the end that those who are far off may be brought near, and that the dead and lost may be recovered to life and salvation.

4. And as stewards of God's mysteries it is required of them that they should be faithful. They

have their offices, not for their own gratification, ease, and comfort, or for their own exaltation and personal glory, but that they may fulfil their office according to the true intent of their Lord and Master, and with conscientious regard to the momentous interests dependent upon them. As servants it is demanded of them to be faithful to Him whose servants they are, and to bend all their energies to the one point of going no farther, and resting satisfied with no less, than His sovereign will prescribes. As stewards it is demanded of them to be faithful to what has been entrusted to them, guarding it carefully, dispensing it purely, and suffering no one to lack to whom it is their business to minister in these holy matters. They are to hear the Word at God's mouth, and to warn and teach men from Him, holding back nothing, and fearlessly declaring the whole counsel of God. Their solemn charge is to preach the Word; to be instant in season and out of season; to reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine; to endure afflictions, do the work of evangelists, and make full proof of their ministry. And no infidelity is worse than infidelity in the holy stewardship of the mysteries of God.

II.

How, then, did Paul feel with regard to men's judgments of his ministerial character? It seems that with some of these Corinthians he was everything, whilst with others he was inferior to Peter, and even to Apollos. Some were for making him their great master and head, and others selected some

one else to whom they adhered over against him. How, then, did these conflicting judgments affect him?

1. *The opinions and conclusions of people in this world he esteemed of very trifling consequence.* His words are, "With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you or of man's judgment." The original and other translations have "man's *day*" (ἀνθρωπίνης ἡμέρας) instead of "man's *judgment*." So also in the margin. The expression is peculiar, and stands in antithesis to "the day of the Lord," when there shall also be a rendering of judgment of a sort much more to be considered than that which men may pronounce. The time in which the apostle wrote, and the whole interval between that and the coming again of Christ to judge the world, is "*man's day*." Man's opinions and resolves now have the sway. All the governments, courts, judgments, and common enterprises of this world are of man's wisdom and making. The laws of society and the standing of men are mostly the aggregate of human opinion and human adjudication. This age (αιων) is the period of the exercise and rule of human self-will, in which man is the chief actor, who judges things according to present interests and necessities, with very little regard to God or what shall be hereafter. And, according to the wisdom and conclusions which now govern, there is scarcely anything that is rightly judged. "Man's day" is particularly unfair to the things of God and eternity. Its discernment does not seem to penetrate them or to have any capacity to decide upon them with justice

Judged by "man's day," the whole economy of God is reversed, the cross is a stumbling-block and foolishness, and those who live and act with reference to eternity are looked upon as weak, shunned as unphilosophic, and often denounced as enthusiasts, visionaries, and fanatics. And a miserable set of men the early Christians were if the decisions of "man's day" concerning them had been without appeal or future rectification.

But the light of "man's day" is a very poor light. Its judgments are superficial, formed on mere likes or expediency, and without force beyond this brief life. They can, when favorable, bring nothing but a poor, ephemeral good, and when adverse they can inflict but a short-lived and feeble disadvantage.

This is the light in which Paul viewed them, and so considered it "a very small thing" that he should be judged by these Corinthians, or "of man's day" in general. No praise or censure of men could materially affect him or turn him from his plain duty as an apostle of Christ. And blessed is that minister who can in like manner rise above what the world may think of him, and live and preach in the light of other judgments than those which earth may render!

2. *He did not rest even in his own judgment of himself.* His conscience was indeed clear. He had nothing with which to charge and condemn himself. What he had done, he had done honestly and faithfully, as far as he understood his own heart. He knew of no failure on his part in the full performance of his duty. He was under no compunctions for

official dereliction. And a most blessed state it is to have a conscience thus "void of offence toward God and toward man." Many would consider it a state of perfection than which there could be nothing higher. But he did not consider even *this* conclusive in his favor: "Yet am I not hereby justified." It is possible for the best of men to be mistaken in their judgments of themselves as well as of other things. People may have clean consciences and know of nothing with which to condemn themselves; and yet in the eye of God things may be very different. Because we think we are all right we are not to conclude that matters are just as we think. Our own consciences even are not the ultimate judges. It is possible to be very conscientious and still be eternally lost. Conscience is too weak and blind a thing to count its decisions an infallible basis upon which to estimate our real standing before God. Paul, with all his great gifts and superior enlighten ment, would not rest in what his conscience testified, nor consider himself irreproachable because his conscience did not reproach him. He knew the deceitfulness of the human heart, and that there was a possibility of forming too favorable an estimate of himself. He knew that God might see defects where he suspected none. He would not therefore involve himself in the folly of trusting to his own judgment.

3. *He committed himself to the unerring judgment of God.* He was aware that God would judge him; that God's judgment alone is that by which he would have to stand or fall in the end; and that from God's judgment there is no appeal. To that, therefore, he

referred his whole case, knowing that God would judge righteously as well as mercifully, and that the decisions of the great day would do him full justice without mistake and without partiality or undue severity. It was thus his heart took refuge from the various criticisms and censures passed upon him, and from the dangers of reliance upon his own self-estimation. Men could not know him as God knew him. Nor could he know himself as the Lord knew him. Human eyes could look only upon the outward appearance, but God was acquainted with all that was stirring in his heart—his inward longings, motives, and strivings, his inarticulate sighs as well as his uttered prayers, and with what degree of earnestness, devotion, and self-sacrifice he had given himself to know nothing but "Christ, and Him crucified." He might be mistaken in his judgment of himself, but the Lord could not be decieved or mistaken. *He* would do right. *He* would judge fairly of all that was in him. And *He* would not wrong him by favors that he ought not to have, or by censures and disparagements which he did not deserve. Therefore, to God's judgment he appealed, and to that he referred himself, as the remedy for all the misjudgments "of man's day," and as a refuge from all this world's criticisms and decisions. And happy is that man who can at all times and in all his trials rest in the thought, "*He that judgeth me is the Lord*"! Earthly censures have no sting to wound such a one. He is shielded, as only a true Christian can be shielded, against disturbances from what men may think of him and from the follies of an overweening

self-confidence. It is a fearful thought, but for a good man it is also full of comfort.

III.

How, then, are we to order our thinking and behavior in this present world? "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts."

1. *There is a day of final judgment coming.* We are now in "man's day," but it will not continue for ever. It will soon have an end, and then will come "the Lord's day"—the day when the drag-net of this dispensation shall come to shore; the day appointed in which God shall judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained; the day when those solemn words of Jesus shall be fulfilled: "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." Nor need we be in doubt as to the certain coming of such a day. Without it the world is a mere foundation without a superstructure, accountability a mere superstitious conceit, and the Church a miserable interference with the native impulses of our being. If it come not, then God has no government over men, and all our spiritual fears, misgivings, and apprehensions are false prophets, and the great revelation of God is nothing but a gigantic lie. Existence itself has no object, no sense, no rational explanation, and justice no reality, if there shall be no day of judgment. But there will be such a day. It

is inlaid in all the structure of things. God has declared it by the mouth of all His holy prophets. Jesus has fore-announced it. Conscience refers all men to it. The eternal claims of inexorable right demand it. And, however long delayed, it must eventually come. You and I and all that shall have lived will see it as certainly as we exist.

2. *It will be a very different day from "man's day."* Jesus is now invisible, and as He is out of sight, He is also largely out of mind. People have never seen Him, and hence the majority scarcely ever think of Him, and many seriously doubt whether He exists or ever did exist at all. But He will then *come* (ἐλθῃ) —advance from His present concealment—appear, make Himself openly manifest; as it is written: "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels" (2 Cor. 1 : 7, 8); "and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matt. 24 : 30); "and every eye shall look upon Him, and they also which pierced Him" (Rev. 1 : 7).

There is also now much passing in the world and in the hearts of mankind which is never found out. Though the public history of the world is largely made up of recitals of sin and wrong, wars, feuds, tyrannies, rebellions, crimes, and revolutionary changes, there is a much wider and fuller field upon which historians have never looked—a field in which all history is enacted before it becomes history; a field crowded with facts over which the veil of secrecy is drawn, hiding the most real and most extensive part of human life from human view. Oh, the ani-

mosities, the murderous deeds, the envies, the adul teries, the jealousies, the uncleannesses, and the unhallowed thoughts and works of treachery, impurity and blood which never see the light here on earth! But when the Lord shall come, He will both "bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts." He himself hath said, "There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known" (Matt. 10:26). The veil shall then be stript from every hypocrite, the cloak drop from every falsity, and every work shall be brought into judgment, "with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." Alas! what a different world this will seem when God shall thus uncover all human hearts and deeds and show them as they appear to His pure eye!

Here also crime is continually escaping its just punishment, and virtue and fidelity deprived of their righteous reward. Wicked men prosper and flourish, and honest men are trodden down, despised, and made to suffer. Vice lifts up its head and carries itself proudly, defiant of all attempts to make it answer for its infamies, whilst virtue lies languishing in obscurity, and piety is sneered at, persecuted, and hated, and the true children of God, like their Lord before them, receive no countenance from the proud ones around them. But the day of the Lord shall rectify all these inequalities. Then will each one reap according to what he has sowed. Wickedness then, as it will not be hidden, will no longer go unpunished, and the worth and fruit of righteousness

shall shine forth in the blessedness of the eternal kingdom for which it has lived and suffered. The triumphing of the wicked will be at an end, and the peace and glory of the saints shall be for ever.

3. *And to that day all our judgments and estimates of things are to be referred.* Most people live only in the light of "man's day." It is with reference to the successes, pleasures, and possessions of this world that they order their ways. They aim at nothing higher. Even the religion of many seemingly zealous Christians is a mere earthly thing. It builds costly temples; it observes days and hours; it glories in grand assemblies and services; it seeks after brilliant sensations and delights in whatever attracts men, whether they are being led in the paths of righteousness and true holiness or not. It makes a great deal of the Bible, except really to believe and obey it; it is very forward in what it calls benevolence, and is very swift to run and serve in showy places where God has not sent it. It is very heroic and generous on great occasions, but with very little heart for the duties of piety and faith where it has nobody to look on and applaud. It takes upon itself the display and ceremonies of godliness; but, after all, its spring is earthly, outward, worldly, and all its impulses find their chief food in the judgments of "man's day." The Lord's day it does not like to hear about. It can think of no greater calamity than the immediate coming of the day of judgment. It even feels itself piously called on to resent and ridicule it as fanaticism and a wicked disturbance of the proper peace of men when we undertake publicly to

intimate that Christ may come in our lifetime, and that it is a Christian's duty to be looking for Him now, any day and every day. What better evidence need we desire that the judgments of such a religion are made up in the light of "man's day" rather than in the light of God's day? The results are manifest: a professing Church, judging as the world judges and walking as the world walks, disgusted with all questions of doctrine, opposed to fixed creeds, and never better pleased than when God's everlasting Word is so explained away as to mean just what any one may prefer.

But this is not the spirit which the apostle inculcates. Christianity is a life, fashioned to the eternal realities of the kingdom of God, and deriving everything it thinks and does from a lively anticipation of the nearing day of judgment, when the Lord shall come, bring to light the hidden things of darkness, make manifest the counsels of the hearts, and give to each according to what he is. It esteems all this world's judgments and awards as "a very small thing," and hence considers nothing rightly judged except as it severs itself from the course of this world and conforms to the eternal principles of truth and right which are to govern in the great day to come.

How is it, then, my brother? Art thou living and judging in the light of "man's day," and with reference to this world only? Or is thine eye fixed upon the day of God and its tribunal for the only proper decision of everything that concerneth thee? Hast thou really turned from this world's idols "to

serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven"? This is thy calling as a Christian. This is thy badge and mark as a child of God. This is thine only refuge against the disappointments, distractions, and disgrace which must befall all other classes of people. Hast thou, then, betaken thyself to it? Child of Adam, art thou living for eternity?

This day of man is drawing to its close. The years go swiftly. They are hardly opened before we find the seasons coming to the end of their round. These things of time and sense must soon vanish for ever. And there is no help, no hope, for us but in our adjustment to that pure and righteous order which must come after this life. Art thou, then, making ready for the change? Care not for what man may say or how this world may judge thee; fix thine eye upon the judgment and the eternal things to come, and act now with reference to them, that when these earthly days are over thou mayest be found of God without spot and blameless.

> *So live* that when the mighty caravan,
> Which halts one night-time in the vale of death,
> Shall strike its white tents for the morning march,
> Thou shalt mount onward to the eternal hills,
> Thy foot unwearied, and thy strength renewed,
> Like the strong eagle's, for the upward flight.

Fourth Sunday in Advent.

PHIL. 4 : 4–7 : Rejoice in the Lord always : and again I say, Rejoice.

Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.

Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

THE festival of God's greatest gift to man now hastens on apace. The last Sunday of preparation has come, and everything around us savors of preparation. In our streets and markets, in our shops and homes, and in the thinking of our hearts, there has been a looking to the Christmas-time and a stir of ready-making for it, at least so far as respects outward observance. The children are full of curious expectation. Relatives and friends have been arranging for many a cunning and pleasant surprise. Invention has been busy working up devices to express good-will and give happiness. And there is scarce a house in which the approach of the great festival of our Saviour's birth is not felt or has not been throwing some light, some happy stir, some brightness. It is well that it is so.

The Epistle Lesson also falls in with the general

tone. It calls upon us to "rejoice." God means that we should be happy and make each other happy. Religion, the religion of Christ, is not gloom, but gladness. Some may look upon it and treat it, and handle themselves, as if the hanging of the head and to go sighing through the world, barring everything pleasant and bright, were the only proper piety. Some even gravely suggest that Christ never smiled. I do not believe any such thing. Who ever saw a babe that never smiled? What would childhood be without its laughter, and merry twinkles of the eye, and play of gladness on the dimpled face? I honor the argument of the little girl who said that Jesus must have smiled, for He took children in His arms, and no good man ever does that without smiling. We do not read that Christ smiled, but neither do we read of the smiling of any one else. The word *smile* is not in the Bible; and are we therefore to conclude that no Bible saint ever smiled? We certainly do not read that Christ was sullen, sour, stoical, and morose. If He could weep with the sorrowing, why could He not rejoice with the glad? His Gospel bears in its very name a fulness of joy to those who rightly receive it. It is God's own remedy for dejection and sadness and for souls that are weary and heavy-laden. It is the brightest thing that ever entered into our world. Its message is "good tidings of great joy to all people." Its office is to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. And people miss the whole spirit and intent of it if they find in it no joy, no gladness.

Nay, the apostolic call upon all Christians is to rejoice in the Lord always—to rejoice evermore.

Though the world has mostly laid aside the abnormities of cowled religion, there is still great lack of joyfulness in many people's piety. It may not be unreal, and yet it has not the brightness and buoyancy properly pertaining to right sonship with God. A true child, conscious of its father's love and goodness, does not eye him with the spirit of a slave or come to him with the downcast look and feeling of a culprit or a beggar. There is no hanging of head, no sullen whine, no dread of his presence, no wish to get away from his sight. There is surely something wrong where that is the case. The true child-spirit comes with glad and open countenance, happy, smiling, trustful, in joyous love. And the good Father in heaven does not wish it otherwise with His children upon earth. We wrong Him, we wrong our profession, we wrong ourselves, if we have no joy in Him, no liberty, no gladness. To think of the treasure of blessedness we have in Christ, every pulse should quicken and the heart in its place should leap. When we think what we would be without Christ, from what darkness and slavery He lifts us, to what honors and hopes He has brought us, with what grace and help in all our life-wants He has endowed us, and how mercifully He has engaged to be our Sun and Shield, to bring us safely through this world, and to crown and glorify us in the next, what cause have we to "rejoice and be exceeding glad"! With Him as our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, God our Father, heaven our

home, why should our heads hang down like the drooping bulrush, or our hearts be dull and heavy as if they were made of lead? Therefore the apostolic word to us is, "*Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice.*"

There are differing kinds of rejoicing. Swine enjoy wallowing in the mud. The sensualist finds his pleasure in indulging his lusts. Many are gladdest in surfeiting, riot, or boisterous animal hilarity. The covetous and miserly are never so well pleased as when they can add to their fortunes and see their wealth increasing, no matter at what sacrifice of honesty, virtue, and the good of the community. The children of this world in general take pleasure in their unrighteousness and glory in their shame, which, to right and honorable people, is only baseness and disgrace and no joy for a proper man. Where is the good of possessing, hoarding, carousing, and playing the fool to all just judgment, with the heart all awry, the soul stifled and suffocated, conscience seared, and even the abused body loaded down with the seeds of disease, disability, and an early death? To joy aright people need to learn to joy "*in the Lord*," for apart from Him there is no true and lasting joy.

The Christian's joy is peculiar. It is like the joy of the bride, who leaves father and mother and all former associations and gladly joins herself with the man she loves, and is happiest in his happiness, whithersoever it may lead her. This relaxes all other bonds and attachments, brings under a new principle of life, links to a new aim and destiny, and

opens a new world of pleasure, interest, and satisfaction from which there is no wish ever to recede. And what sort of a bride is she whose heart and soul do not go with her into her new home and sphere—who finds nothing to enlist her affections, and enters upon marriage in drooping sadness, as if she were entering the heavy doors of some dark prison about to close upon her for ever? Such a bride would be unworthy of the name, and would not deserve to be called a wife. A true bride of a worthy man has her highest being and delight in her husband. And so a true Christian ever rejoices in the Lord.

Ah, yes, you say, it is easy to talk, and a great thing it would be to be able to live so delectably. But here is this ugly, evil, and tormenting world. How is it possible to maintain a good and cheerful heart amid so many provoking ills, disappointments, afflictions, wrongs, and sorrows?

Dear friends, these are no drawbacks to a true Christian peace and joy. When this Epistle was written the church at Philippi was laboring under heavy persecutions. Many were being torn from their homes, stript of their possessions, cast into prisons, and greatly oppressed. And yet the message of the apostle to them said, "Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice." How were they to rejoice amid all these wrongs and dangers? As if anticipating this very question, the further word was added, "*Let your moderation be known unto all men, the Lord is at hand.*"

That word *moderation* means an easy and gentle

mind, a pliable, yielding, and forbearing temper, a disposition to let things that cannot be helped have their way without noting and dwelling upon them as calamities. People who are always on the lookout for offences, neglects, and affronts—people who are always concerned to stand on their dignity and what they consider their rights—people who are always fretted over what goes wrong, and become morose and resentful when trials come upon them, and consider everything upside down when their wills and likes are crossed,—never can be happy. Mildness, moderation, gentleness, the making of but little of what goes against them for the time, is a wonderful charm to do away with the ills of this life.

There is an old fable that the sun and the wind once had a controversy as to which of them could pull the mantle from a traveller's shoulders the quickest. So the winds blew upon the man with all their energy, but the harder they blew, the tighter he wound that mantle around him. All its dashing violence and fury could not loose it, and only made the task more hopeless. Then the sun shone out in mild and gentle radiance, so soft that the traveller could not feel it on his cheek, but under the genial warmth he began to open his cloak, and presently took it off altogether. What no violence could accomplish, gentleness triumphantly achieved. Nay, to rave and fret and batter at the ills and wrongs with which we meet is like the demented man banging his fist against shadows on the wall: the shadows remain unhurt, and he only injures and breaks his hand. Let a man turn away his eyes from the shad-

ows and gently go his way, and they will leave without his angry quarrel with them, and will not harm him in the least. What we need is gentleness and moderation, and half the ills and hardships of which people complain will modify and fade away, or turn to very benedictions.

And what if we do suffer sometimes? What if our estate as compared with others is one of adversity and humiliation? The evil cannot be of long duration. Those who do us injustice and wrong hurt themselves more than they hurt us, and their judgment is coming: "*The Lord is at hand.*" Be the affliction what it may, it shall be soon swallowed up in the eternal blessedness then to be revealed. There is a glorious and everlasting recompense of reward for every sorrowing and oppressed believer, and Jesus will bring it with Him when He comes, while the proud and all that do wickedly shall then be as stubble to the fire, and the day that cometh shall leave them neither root nor branch. Why load down our souls with contentions for a world ready to be overwhelmed, or make ourselves bond-slaves to our own vindication when God is Himself about to avenge us so fully and so speedily? What will it count to our disadvantage in heaven that somebody has cheated, hated, or persecuted us during the few days we have here to live? or that we have had a little less of this world's sunshine than others in making our short pilgrimage to the world of eternal righteousness and rest? And why, then, be troubled and bowed down, unable to rejoice in God, because of these earthly adversities? There is every reason

why we should make but little of them; and, being mild, gentle, and forbearing, there is really nothing in them to silence our songs or to hinder our joy in the Lord.

But we must live, you say, and to get a living is hard. When the meal-chest is exhausted, and the rent is due, and children's clothes wear out, and one's employment fails, and the money and credit are wanting for the ordinary necessaries of life, and the anxious, perplexing, and overwhelming question is here, how on earth to make ends meet, how can we be joyful and glad-hearted? Ah, these troubles about what we shall eat, and what we shall drink, and wherewithal we shall be clothed,—what a dreadful nightmare to many people! But it is a needless anguish, and one which the apostle bids Christians cast from them altogether. Not that we are not to work and exert ourselves for the procurement of an honest livelihood—not that we are to fold our hands in our lap to wait for harvests to come without sowing and the bread to rain upon us without our toiling and sweating to procure it. An indolent, do-nothing, lazy, and idle man deserves to starve, and if his bread and water fail him by reason of his indolence and improvidence, he has no right to claim it from others. Christianity has no promises and consolations for such. But, though it is the bounden duty of every Christian to provide for his own, and especially for them that are of his own house, there is no occasion to crush out all good cheer with over-anxieties and distressing cares about it. The Germans call it *Sorge*—a torturing anxiety; but most

of this *Sorge* is from ambition and greed rather than necessity. People can do and live on very much less than they are accustomed to count necessary, and if they are not content to do it when necessity is upon them, it is their own fault if they are vexed and tormented how to make ends meet.

But even in the greatest straits there is no occasion for a Christian to lose his joy in the Lord; and he does a very foolish thing if he allows it.

A man on the highway, bending and staggering under a heavy load, was invited to get into a passing wagon to relieve himself of his burden. He entered, but still kept the load on his back. Silly man! why not lay his burden down? The opportunity was there, and if he did not avail himself of it, he was himself at fault. A chariot of grace has likewise overtaken us, and into it we are invited to enter, that both our load and ourselves may be borne along by it. And the Christian who allows himself to be tortured and oppressed with the burden of life's necessities is like the man in the wagon carrying the load which the wagon is there to carry. If he is a right Christian, let him lay his burden down on that same Power which carries him and it, and be free from the crushing weight.

There is a providence which has brought us into this world, and is taking us through it. God knows His business, and is able to attend to it. How silly for a child who has always had plenty to start a great ado and cry that its wealthy father perhaps cannot feed and clothe it any longer! But what better is it for a Christian man, whom his Father in heaven has

never suffered to want, to be wringing himself with anguish for fear that God cannot provide for him any more? Child of God, if tormenting care is upon you it is your prerogative to cast it upon the Lord. If you are a believer, you are in the Father's house, and He bids you trust all to Him and believe that He will provide for you according to what is best. He loves you. He has redeemed you by the blood of His Son. He cares for you. And He will not leave His own children to suffer anything to their hurt. If you are ailing, sick, tottering under the infirmities of increasing age, and find yourself drawing near to death, He knows it, and will not permit you to be any worse off on that account. It is the way of His providence to withdraw you from a world of care, to bring you to Himself, to make you blest for ever. There is not a thing in it all to deprive you of your peace and joy in Him. Though the buoyancy of youth be gone, your property lost, your health wretched, your friends few and cold-hearted, there is One who loves you as His dear child, and knows all your wants, and has pledged that He will never leave nor forsake you—that His grace shall be sufficient for you; yea, that your very trials and afflictions shall be to you more than golden treasures to enrich and bless you all the more for having passed through them hopefully, trustfully, patiently. The thing is to look up to Him, confide in Him, and rejoice in the Lord always.

Ah, but you are so weak! You try to be resigned and content with your lot—you resolve that you will dismiss your heaviness and be cheerful in your Sa-

viour's love; but the old gloom still hangs over the soul. You would rise up and be joyful in the Lord, and cease your fretting, doubtings, and fears, but you are so weak you cannot do it. Hear, then, what further the apostle has to say to you: *Pray*—"*in everything by prayer and thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.*" Notice how a child in its needs goes to its parent—how gratefully and confidently and successfully it applies to parental love to pity it, to help it, to take it by the hand, to defend and protect it. And when does ever the true parental heart turn away from it in its necessities, weaknesses, and fears? And is God less good and tender toward His children than earthly parents to theirs? Nay, the Saviour's word is that He is more willing to give His Spirit to them that ask Him than earthly parents to give good things to their children, and that whatsoever we ask the Father in His name that is at all right and proper for us to ask, He will give it you.

Think, too, through how many trials, fears, and distresses God has brought us in the past, turning what seemed our misfortune into blessing and our reverses into successes. And He is as able and willing to do for us the same now and in the future that He has ever done, if only we go to Him as grateful, confiding, and obedient children.

There is a world of strength at our command if we will only apply for it in true confidence in our heavenly Father's goodness. Having helped us in six troubles, we may safely count upon His aid and mercy for the seventh. It is only our unfaith our

want of trust, our unworthy thoughts of God's love, and our lack of prayer and grateful application to Him, that is our weakness. We have mighty interests in heaven, and strength to do and grace to help in every time of need, if we only draw on them as we are bidden and directed. If we would pray more, and give ourselves more to the praising and thanking of God for the mercies He is constantly showering upon us beyond our deservings, there would be less fretting, less gloom, less complaining, less weakness, less misgiving. And if we are so infirm that we cannot master the depression and despondency of our souls, it is because we do not half appreciate or lay hold on the strength that is at our call and command. Peter looks at the waves, and he sinks; Peter looks and prays to the Christ, and he is delivered, and the boisterous sea has no power over him. What we want is believing prayer and full confidence in our God, and we can walk on the most turbulent waters, tread down sorrow beneath our feet, triumph in the hottest fires, sing in the darkest night, and rejoice in the Lord always.

Ah, but you cannot see how you are to get through or how God is to help you. You have thought it all out, and you cannot conceive how it is possible to master your peculiar and accumulated adversities. God has taken your child, your dependence, the joy of your heart, the object to which your soul was knit. Your life and your body have been mutilated. How can faith or prayer bring back the dead, restore the lost member, repair the circle so sadly broken? You have reasoned the whole matter, and there is no

light. You can only weep and lament in uncurable sorrow. But here is the promise, which goes farther than any reason can carry or any understanding of ours can show the way. If our hearts are supremely centred on God, and set to find our supreme joy in Him alone, His pledge is, "*The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ.*" He will not bring back the dead till the time of resurrection. He will not restore the lost sense or the amputated limb till that time of restitution called "the redemption of the body." Neither hath He engaged to take away the thorn which may be torturing the festering flesh. The consumptive may never be cured in this world, or the fortune that is lost be recovered to its impoverished owner. There may be no more sun to rise to brighten our situation here. All light of earthly calculation may have faded out never to return. But that does not alter the pledge. There is a sunshine which earthly reason cannot see. There is a blessedness which earthly misfortunes cannot control. There is a prosperity which lives on amid the wrecks of earthly hope and the dismemberment and dissolution of the body. We may not be able to comprehend it or tell how it is. But faith realizes it. Union with Christ imparts it. The soul drinks it in and feasts upon it. And every true and rightly-exercised believer experiences it—even the peace of God which passeth all understanding, keeping his heart and mind through Jesus Christ. And hence, whatever the earthly situation may be, the word is, "*Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice.*"

There is a Christmas in the world which annually lifts upon us a light of joy and gladness and breathes a heavenly benediction upon all the children of men. But there is a sublimer Christmas in every believing soul. It is a Christmas which no adversities can cloud, and which lasts all the year and all the life. If it is not so, it is because there is no proper ready-making for it. With Christ born and welcomed in the heart, there comes with Him a sweet and everlasting benediction which no sorrows of earth or crosses of time can ever extinguish. And the call of the text is for us to open these cavernous depths of the soul, where beasts and filth and darkness have had place, and let in the coming Christ. He does not disdain the lowliness, the rough accommodations, the manger, and the rags. And with Him shall come light and gladness and angel-songs, and gold and frankincense as well as myrrh; and so shall we "rejoice in the Lord always."

A Day, a Day of Glory!
A Day that ends our woe!
A Day that tells of triumph
Against the vanquished foe!
Yield, summer's brightest sunrise,
To this December morn:
Lift up your gates, ye Princes,
And let the Child be born!

Christmas.

TITUS 2: 11–14 (Revised Version): For the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us, to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world; looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a people for his own possession, zealous of good works.

N a Christmas sermon attributed to Gregory of Nyssa it is said, "Throughout all the habitable world to-day is heard the accordant sound of joyous festival." The Church celebrates one of the highest feasts in her calendar. According to Chrysostom, a man would not err in calling it "the chief of all festivals." It is the first of the new Church Year, and those that come after have their fountain-head in its great facts. Even the heavenly festival of completed redemption is but the crown of the jubilation begun with the song of angels over the birth of the Son of Mary at Bethlehem.

In full sympathy with this estimate is the Epistle Lesson for to-day, which the Church in her wisdom has put before us. Three things are here brought to our contemplation:

I. THE TRUE CHRISTMAS GIFT;

II. THE TRUE CHRISTMAS OBLATION;

III. The True Christmas Hope.

To these, then, let us briefly but devoutly direct our thoughts.

I. The True Christmas Gift.

The apostle speaks of "*grace*," "the grace of God"—a divine friendliness, favor, and benefaction. The presentation is, that there has been thought of us in heaven, and that it has been a kindly and pitying thought. There has been a motion from eternity to provide a Christmas joy for our fallen world. Grace, a favoring God, a propitious heaven, is the keynote of the whole.

Nor is it a hidden or unmanifested grace. Once it lay concealed in the eternal counsel and foreknowledge of God, unknown to any creature; but it has since been brought to light and bodied forth in living form. The apostle says it "*hath appeared*." Christmas contains the demonstration. A supernal Gift has been laid down in our world. The love of God has expressed itself in visible and tangible shape. As another apostle writes, "In this was *manifested* the love of God toward us, because that God *sent His only-begotten Son into the world*" (1 John 4:9).

In the beginning God gave the *creating Word*. Out of it light was born; earth emerged from the void of waters; sun, moon, and stars took their places in the firmament; life teemed through land and sea; man started up from the dust, erect in form, inbreathed with soul, and walking the avenues of Paradise; while "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." Time

passed. Occasion arose for a new creation to conserve the first. The subjugation of chaos was to be re-enacted in a higher sphere. Again God gave the *Word*, the *redemptive* Word. There was an arrival from heaven. The Son of God took on human flesh and blood. "The Word" itself became incarnate. The Maker of the worlds, the Heir of all things, "the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth," alighted on the smitten and sorrowing earth. And the heavens vibrated with the superlative song of "Glory to God in the highest!" The grace of God had *appeared*—appeared in a born "Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." To the gift of creation was added a sublimer giving, and the gift was JESUS.

Strange that we should find all embodied in a new-born infant! So much sacred prediction and holy song, so much hallowed expectation and fond longing, the Hope of ages, the Desire of nations, Deity on a mission to redeem a world, all concentred and tied up in a "babe wrapped in swaddling-clothes and lying in a manger"! New-creating Godhead incarnated in a little child! The grand sweep of eternal redemption starting in the helpless and scarce animate being of a needy firstling, to whom the world awarded no better birthplace than a stable! Reason is confounded. Thought is pushed to confusion. Faith trembles on the brink of a sea too deep for fathom-line, too broad for measurement. Awe intensifies into paralysis.

> The mighty God in swaddled infancy!
> We speak, we cannot *search* the mystery.

But it is withal a potent, efficacious grace. It "*bringeth salvation.*" Not everything was done and accomplished when the Christ was born. There were yet many great and mighty things to be achieved and many momentous scenes to be enacted before the grand scheme should reach its consummation. But, potentially, it was all in that swaddled infant cradled in a manger.

Wondrous things are included in *salvation.* It is hard to tell the fulness of it. All the guilt of all men discharged by a full payment and satisfaction; all the ills of sin reversed; the entire curse cancelled and lifted from soul and body and the ailing earth; the chains of bondage to corruption completely dissolved; the broken links of man's happy union with God readjusted; the sting of death plucked out; the grave emptied and obliterated; the powers of darkness destroyed; and all the barriers to our immortal regency and glory for ever swept away,—are some of the items in the sublime achievement. A new kingdom of light and life established; a new centre of gravitation for the soul brought into everlasting force; a new genesis of our being wrought out; a new investiture with imperishable dominion made; new heavens and a new earth created,—all enter into what is comprehended in *salvation.* Yet all this was pledged and potentially in that Babe of Bethlehem, for in Him came "the grace of God, bringing *salvation.*"

And the bringing was "*to all men.*" In a double sense Jesus is "the Saviour of all men." No one was ever born in the ordinary course of generation

whose birth and existence did not depend on the birth and covenanted redemption-work of Jesus. But for Him our first parents would have perished in their sin, and no race of man would ever have existed. Thus, all men live and the world stands by virtue of the grace of God in Christ. But He is "the Saviour *especially of them that believe*." And this special salvation is also provided for all men. It is unlimited and universal in its offers, and is only hindered from saving all men because of unbelief. As all share in the lower and temporal salvation, so it is proposed to all to share also in the higher and eternal part of it. Nay, the one *is* that the other may be. No class, nation, sex, or age is excluded from the benefit if people will only take it. As wide as the curse, so wide is the provided antidote. In the course of history it comes first to some and later to others; but the Christmas tidings are "*to all people* (Luke 2 : 10)—to Jews and Gentiles, to kings and shepherds, to rich and poor, to great and small, to men and women, to adults and children—from Bethlehem to the world's ends. The whole world was in that love of God which gave to it His only-begotten Son, and the gift itself was for that same world, "that *whosoever* believeth on Him might not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3 : 16).

This, then, is God's true Christmas Gift, as described in our Epistle.—Note, now,

II. The True Christmas Oblation.

So great and gracious a donation calls for something from us. Had it been for angels or for beings

in other worlds, it still would challenge our interest and admiration. Though it is for us, and pre-eminently for *our* particular benefit, the angels were intensely moved, and could not restrain their enthusiasm, when the Christ was born. All heaven was stirred. Its doors opened; its glory streamed forth upon the dark earth; its inhabitants rushed forth in radiant multitudes; and from zenith to horizon the whole sky was vocal with sublimest jubilation over this superlative piece of divine beneficence toward the poor, lost, and helpless children of men. And how can we be in right mind or in dutiful position without some profound and soul-felt demonstration in view of such a sublime benefaction?

Christmas has produced a stir among men from the first. Though the event it celebrates was a private thing, shepherds were astounded with visions and voices from other worlds. Sages were moved to a great expedition by tokens shown them in the stars. Kings were made uneasy on their thrones. Venerable saints in the temple broke out in prophetic songs. And many agitations of souls and of nations have been created by it since the angel said, "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour which is Christ the Lord." The whole world is more or less full of Christmas demonstrations. Sanctuaries are open, with evergreens around the altars of praise, and special songs and thanksgivings on the lips of the worshippers. Gifts and joyous greetings are dispensed in the circles of friendship. Happy surprises and many cheerful merrymakings are in earth's homes. Dwellings are lighted with

cheerful marks of another point in life's journey reached in comfort and in peace. And there be but few spots or relations in life into which the radiations of the Christ-Child have not sent some joyous inspirations. It is one of the tokens of the quickening power let forth among the populations of the earth when the Son of God became incarnate.

But all this, however appropriate, beautiful, and deserved, does not fill out the true Christmas oblation. There is a dominion of ungodliness and worldly lusts to be assailed and broken. There is an adjustment of soul to the Christmas facts and presentations to be made. Christ was born into the world that He may be born into us as our hope of glory. We need to contemplate Him with faith in the sublimity of His nature, mission, and offices, and to open our hearts to Him in glad welcome as *our* Saviour and Redeemer. There is call for a sobering up of our lives to receive the divine Guest and to entertain Him with a becoming devotion. Such transcendent grace and goodness demands a grateful, humble, and submissive drawing near to the holy Christ who thus "gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a people for His own possession, zealous of good works." His very coming as the embodied grace of God for our salvation has in it a disciplinary intent and teaching to turn away our eyes from beholding vanity, to recover our hearts from their alienation, and to move us to glad hosannas to Him who cometh in the name of the Lord. Where the old native deadness to the great things of God and the soul

still reigns, and the corrupt and godless desires of the natural heart still govern, and no waking up to the practical adjustment of our being to the regenerating and reformatory principles of life to Him takes place, whatever else may be, there is no right Christmas joy, no true Christmas oblation.

Let it never be forgotten that Christmas is no mere civic or carnal feast. Its whole appeal is to the soul. However we may answer to it externally, or seek to reflect its spirit in outward joys, domestic delights, and convivial pleasures, the true joy of it is *spiritual*. Its blessedness lies in the believing contemplation of the Christ-Child, constituted, born, and sent of God to bring us out of sin's condemnation and power and to fashion us to His own purity and fellowship. The meaning is to have us drop all other servitude and care and come with adoring cheerfulness to honor Jesus as our Lord, and find our rule of life in dutiful citizenship in His kingdom. This is Christianity, and this is the true Christmas oblation.—Note, then,

III. The True Christmas Hope.

The Incarnation of the Son of God was a tremendous fact. It constituted a new style of august and worshipful Being. It started a new era in heaven and in the history of Godhead, as well as in the time-reckonings of earth. It introduced new features in the Jehovah-presentations and in the Jehovah-economies. It constituted an everlasting God-man, whose existence and place affect worlds, ages, and the very throne of Deity. It necessitated a new

condition and order of administrations corresponding to its own wonderfulness. The Scriptures accordingly tell of a resultant train of things, involving earth and heaven, time and eternity. If the Incarnation was a reality, this could not be otherwise. There cannot be a sun without light. Neither God nor man can *be* without some result of that being. And so the constitution of a *God-man* in one indivisible and everlasting Person necessarily set into living force an endless succession of consequences commensurate with the nature, relations, place, offices, and destiny of the Christ.

The Incarnation therefore embodied a vast outlook along with the wonder it was in itself. A real Christmas is a planting of God which must have a future of its own. The blessed beginning inevitably looks onward to a blessed end in the line of its own character and object. The one implies and necessitates the other. And thus Christmas has its own peculiar hope.

What that hope is depends upon the nature and intent of what Christmas embraces. If it is the gracious constitution, birth, and manifestation of a competent and everlasting Saviour, then all that is comprehended in a perfected redemption is the true and peculiar Christmas hope. And this is precisely what the Scriptures set forth as to come out of the great Christmas facts. The birth of the Christ and His manifestation in human life was the appearing of the grace of God, "bringing salvation." That salvation, for the present, is the recovery of a people from iniquity, their purification unto fellowship and com-

munity with Christ, and their peculiar nationalization into a zealously good-doing people, hopefully awaiting the appearance of the glory of their great God and Saviour. The birth of the Son of God into our world, in our nature, to wear upon Him the dust of this earth, to moisten it with His tears and sweat and blood, to instruct its ignorance and die for its sins, to invite upon Him its confidence and hopes, to place before it the rules and example of a godly life, to stand as man's Goel and Intercessor before the throne of Eternal Majesty, and to condition and administer the dispensations of heaven for the training and maturing of souls to meetness for an inheritance of saints in light,—is the history of this salvation-bringing from the Incarnation until now. But this is not the end of the matter. The great consummation is yet in the future. The coming in humility is not the whole coming of the Christ, but only preliminary to a coming in glory. The preparing of a people for His own possession, and the bringing of them through faith and obedience into community with Himself, contemplate the forthcoming of a kingdom not yet revealed. Hence He has directed us to hope and pray for the kingdom to come, assuring us also, in the very prayer He has dictated, that then all shall be "on earth as it is in heaven."

Ah, yes, there is a peculiar and precious Christmas *hope*—a blessed future inrooted with the Christmas facts. Advent looks on to Advent, and the right celebration of the one takes in a glad anticipation of the other.

Isaiah sung a right Christmas hymn to ancient

Israel when he looked down the stream of ages and exclaimed, "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever" (Isa. 9 : 6, 7). By its own inspired terms that Christmas hymn looked on from the manger to a throne—from a stable to the dominion of the earth—from childhood's feebleness to the powers of invincible judgment—from a world that had no house open for the divine Prince to be born in, to a world filled with the glory of His presence and righteous rule. It was the same in the original promise and in Gabriel's annunciation to Mary. The Son of the woman was to be the King of the ages—Christmas the prelude to glorious empire.

And a blessed hope is this Christmas hope. Glad was the day when the Christ was born. The angels sang. The stars reflected what had happened. The earth shone. The din of war was hushed. All nature seemed to quiet itself in solemn calm. And a new light dawned upon the world. But a gladder day for earth and man will be the day of consummation of what then began. The Babe in swaddling-clothes will then show Himself "our great God and Saviour." Instead of the humiliation of a cattle-cave will be "the glory of the Father." The manger

will have given place to a heavenly throne. The sound of trumpets shall be added to the angelic demonstrations. And graves shall open; and the dead shall live; and death die; and tears cease; the curse expire; the kingdom come; the old world vanish; earth be folded in the bosom of heaven; and the whole universe resound with halleluias over "the restitution of all things."

Hail to that day! Who would not bid it welcome? The heart of the Church goes out to it as the pole-star of her hope. Through all these weary ages her comfort has been in her "looking for the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ." Till then the kingdom drags. Till then weakness and corruption reign. Till then the heart is sick with hope deferred. Till then we must groan in these tabernacles or sleep in sad and gloomy tombs. Till then God's anointed kings must wait for their crowns. Till then through trials and wrongs we must keep the word of His patience. But Christmas is the forepledge of a blessed day when the Prince and High Priest of our profession shall come forth in the robes of His imperial majesty to lay the capstone of redemption amid shoutings of "Grace, grace, unto it!" These gladnesses, kindled in the depths of earth's drear and darkness, are the cheering fore-glimpses of an immortal spring-time, when life and joy and unending peace through Jesus Christ shall be the possession of the universe.

O happy, happy Christmas! With what mighty things does it connect! Of what transforming grace of God is it the witness! What gates of joy has it

lifted upon our sorrowing world! What foundations of blessed hope has it laid for our fallen race! To what heights and ages of ages of glory does it point! The most precious treasures of all that live are wrapped up in its wondrous facts. All salvation rests on what it celebrates and attests. No Christmas, no Paradise! No birth of Jesus, no Calvary's cross, no Easter morn, no Mount of Ascension, no kingdom of mercy, no hope for man!

Blessed Christmas! The light of it brightens our homes; let its facts brighten our hearts and enliven our hopes. The thrill of it is on the social world; let its evangelic power quicken still more the inner world of faith. It has brought us the richest Gift ever vouchsafed in time; let us honestly embrace it, and ours is a glad eternity.

Church-bells are ringing, ringing, ringing,
Outpouring their heavenly lay;
Angels are singing, singing, singing,
Jesus is born to-day!
Glory to God in the highest—glory!
Peace on the earth, good will to men!
Angels and bells resound the story;
Ring it, sing it again.

Second Christmas Day.

TITUS 3 : 4–7: But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

CHRISTIANITY is the foe of all selfishness, pride, harshness, and ill-nature. Even when there would seem to be cause for severity toward a fellow-man, the precepts of the Gospel are all against it. Nor are they unreasonable precepts. One consideration alone is sufficient to justify them—namely, that God has exemplified them in His dealings toward us, though we deserve worse from Him than any of our fellow-men have ever deserved from us. In summing up what God our Saviour has done for us, notwithstanding that we were "foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another," two things are specially indicated in the text, to which I now invite attention:

I. THE DIVINE AFFECTION TOWARD US;
II. THE BLESSED FRUITS OF THAT AFFECTION.

And may God our Saviour in His mercy aid us rightly to take in His blessed truth!

I. The Divine Affection toward us.

There are four distinct words employed to express this affection: "*kindness*," "*love*," "*mercy*," "*grace*." Let us look at each separately.

1. *Kindness*, χρηστότης, a word used ten times in the New Testament, rendered *goodness* five times, *kindness* four times, and *gentleness* once. Its root-meaning is usefulness, serviceableness, the disposition to be profitable and good toward others. God does not live for Himself alone. He does not shut Himself up in the solitary grandeur of His own eternal being, with no one to share in the blessedness of that divine glory—no creatures to see, admire, praise, and rejoice in His power and Godhead—no making of other beings happy by the exercise of His almighty wisdom and beneficence. It was His will to be known, to have His glory manifested, to put His Godhead forth in creations infinite; and hence He hath peopled immensity with existences and intelligences to illustrate His sublimity, and to be to each the cause and the conservator of endless and unbounded good and happiness. He does not possess and keep His adorable Deity simply for Himself, but has used it to give being and blessing to innumerable orders of creation in innumerable worlds, and ever uses it to preserve all those creations and to make them happy in Him. Though infinitely higher than all creatures, He is the servant of all, and ever tasks His eternal power and Godhead to give and sustain and bless being upon being in variety and number infinite, giving its lustre to the insect's wing while wheeling his throne upon

the rolling worlds. Doing good, giving good, ever making, ever serving what He has made, and ever living for the universe He has called into being,—this is the character and the *kindness* of our God.

2. *Love* (*φιλανθρωπία*), philanthropy; particular love toward men; interest in human well-being; tenderness, particularly with reference to mankind. As covetousness is the love of gain, philanthropy is the love of man. The ancient philosophers called certain animals *philanthropa*, because of their natural delight in man, their desire to be with him, and their pleasure and satisfaction in serving him. And this *philanthropy* the apostle here ascribes to God our Saviour. Moses had done the same before where he says, "The Lord *loved the people*" (Deut. 33 : 2, 3). "The meaning is, not only that God is bountiful, kind, gentle, and sweet, bearing with and receiving all, but also that he so loveth us as, of his own accord, to join himself unto us, seeking to have to do with us, voluntarily showing and offering his favors to us, and most tenderly embracing as many as do not refuse his love and desire to draw near to him" (Luther). And so marked and conspicuous is this divine affection for man that the Psalmist singles it out for his particular admiration. Contemplating the immensity and grandeur of the heavenly worlds, he is amazed that such tender love should be bestowed upon so frail a race as ours: "When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that Thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that Thou visitest him?" The stretch of

condescension appears beyond the bounds of all anticipation or possibility. And yet such is the philanthropy of our God and Saviour that He is ready and anxious to crown all men with dominion and blessing world without end.

3. *Mercy* (ἔλεος), pity, compassion. God is not only kindly disposed toward us, and moved with a particular love for us, but He also commiserates our sad and fallen estate. Though we be guilty before Him, and our sins call loudly for His condemnation, and our faults cannot for one moment be excused, yet He is sorrowful of heart over our calamity, and sympathizes with us under the burden of evils and dangers that are upon us, and is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. Our sufferings reach His soul and stir His eternal being, and set in motion His almighty Godhead to relieve and deliver us. Our very weaknesses, despondencies, and failures bring Him the nearer to us and awaken in Him the greater tenderness toward us. As a mother hangs with more loving sympathy and lively concern over her hurt, bleeding, and sick child than over any other, so the Lord is moved with pity over the bruised and sorrowing and desponding children of men. And just in proportion as we feel our weaknesses, guilt, failures, miseries, and are dissatisfied with ourselves and our ways, and look and long for help and deliverance, in that same proportion is God filled with compassion over us, and ready and anxious to bring us out of all our distresses. Let a man be as worthless and wicked as he may, if he does but realize his situation and is broken down in spirit

over the wrecks of good resolves with which his career is strewn, and really sighs for a new and better life, he need never despair of the mercy and loving-kindness of our God and Saviour.

He from all griefs releases,
He all our sorrows shares.

4. *Grace* (χάρις), favor, gratuitous good-will, benefaction in the absence of all merit, the taking into friendly regard without desert or compensation, the vouchsafement of the needed help where no claim to it exists. Whatever prospers, relieves, blesses, or saves when nothing else can so help, especially if all right to it has been vitiated and forfeited, comes under the significance of this term. It is one of those elastic words which compasses the most precious fruits of goodness toward the unfortunate and undeserving, and which is continually used in the Scriptures to denote the whole volume of divine beneficence in procuring and conferring the forgiveness, sanctification, and redemption of hell-deserving man. And when the apostle ascribes it to God, he means to assure us that the Almighty is so good, loving, and compassionate that no past sins of ours and no depths of unworthiness and guilt on our part are any bar to His reception of us into His protection or to the free bestowment upon us of a complete and everlasting deliverance from all sin and all its effects and consequences, if only we are willing that He should be our God and Saviour.

To make this possible, a great and mysterious expedient was required, involving the incarnation, life,

death, resurrection, ascension, and heavenly administrations of the eternal Son of God, and demanding the enactment of a history which stands without a parallel in the universe. But that work has been done, and eternity has been laid under contributions to make it possible for God to be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly children of men. And now, through Christ Jesus, it is within the power, as it is in the loving heart, of the Lord of heaven and earth to take whosoever will under His sovereign care, to cleanse, sanctify, and redeem them from all iniquity, and to make them compatriots with holy angels and copartners with Jesus upon the throne of eternal empire. It is for this that the Gospel sounds and that the Church has her calling and commission. And Scriptures, sacraments, histories, prophecies, and a world of administrations all about us witness that God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come unto Him and have life eternal without money and without price. Not only without any works of righteousness on our part, which no one of himself can produce, but even notwithstanding evil works innumerable, He has grace, favor, and life everlasting for all who are willing to accept them.

Such and so blessed is the disposition of our God and Saviour toward us.—We come now to notice,

II. The Fruits of that Affection.

These are all summed up in one word, "*salvation.*" But salvation is a process, and is the result of various and complex operations, having different stages, each

one of which equally with the whole is the direct product of the divine goodness.

1. *A Prevenient Grace, preparing the Way for the Reception of Salvation.* If it were not for this, no one could take the redemption which is offered him. Our doctrine is, that in spiritual and divine things it is not possible for a man, in his own natural strength, to understand, believe, embrace, think, will, begin, accomplish, perform, work, or co-operate in any manner or degree without some foregoing grace and heavenly power enabling him so to do. In our unregenerate state death and sin reign over us, the devil is our lord and master, and there remains no power, virtue, wisdom, or understanding in us by which to prepare ourselves for righteousness or life, or at all to seek after it or move in it. We are only blind captives, in love with our captivity, and cannot be or wish to be anything else without the gift of the Holy Ghost given in advance to enable us to believe in Christ and to come to Him.

We are indeed called upon to repent, to turn from our evil ways, to believe in Jesus, to come to Him, and to take to ourselves the offered salvation; and it is our privilege and our duty to comply with this call—so much so that to refuse and disobey will be to us all the greater condemnation. We have liberty and power to hear, accept, and comply with the Gospel, and it must inevitably enhance our perdition if we do not use that freedom. But whence have we that power and opportunity? Cometh it from our own native powers? or cometh it from the Holy Ghost, and from the grace of God going before

every work, thought, or desire on our part? Can there be any question on this point? We can listen to the Gospel if we will; yes, but it is only because God has first come to us with that Gospel, and so mightily speaks in it by His life-giving word as that our dead hearts may open to it. We can believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; yes, but only because God has first come to us with His law to awaken us to a knowledge of our need of Him, and carries the Christ to us that we may know who He is and take Him as our Saviour. This liberty to turn from our unrighteousness to serve the living and true God is not the prerogative of our unregenerate nature, but the gracious gift conferred upon us through Jesus Christ. And but for this goodness, philanthropy, mercy, and grace of God our Saviour, we never could have had the first or feeblest motion or thought toward that salvation which many still so lightly esteem.

Herein, then, have the kindness and love of God been manifested, that without any works, desires, thoughts, or merit on our part, and while utterly dead to all sacred things, it has been put within our power to decide our own destiny—to believe unto eternal life or not, just as we elect. He has by His grace cleared away every natural disability, and made it possible for "whosoever will" to accept of salvation and live for ever. Oh, it is a blessed privilege that a free redemption is offered to us, and that we each and all are now at liberty, without let or hindrance, to accept and enjoy eternal salvation. Even if we should fail to profit by the opportunity,

it is a mercy and kindness beyond all computation that we each have this liberty. And to God's gracious affection alone are we indebted for it.

2. *The Grace of Holy Baptism.* There is a value set upon this sacrament in the Holy Scriptures which presents it as one of the most precious things in Christianity. The text calls it "the washing, or laver, of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Peter on the day of Pentecost preached it up as conjoined with "the remission of sins," and wrote of it in his Epistle as that which "doth also now save us," even as the ark of Noah saved those who were in it from the devouring flood. Paul elsewhere commends it as that whereby we are buried in Christ, destroying the body of sin, and evoking a newness of life toward God over which sin and death have no more dominion. Jesus Himself locates it among those conditions on which His promise of salvation is given, and says, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3 : 5). Hence the Catechism rightfully declares concerning Baptism, that "it works forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and gives everlasting salvation to all who believe, as the words and promises of God declare." That is to say, where it is rightly received and held it is the implantation into that sacred kingdom of grace, to whose subjects all the promises and offers of Christ apply, and to whom they are given and sealed. As a mere outward ceremony, where there is no true faith and no giving of heart and soul to what Baptism implies, of course

the precious treasure of this sacrament is thrown away. But Baptism is not a mere outward ceremony. It is "the laver of saving water," as Cyprian calls it, which carries the whole Gospel and all its graces to every one who receives it, and pledges and seals to its recipient everything implied in salvation. If it fails in this to any one who has been baptized, it is not the fault or weakness of the Baptism or the result of any deficiency of power and divine efficacy in it, but the unbelief, hard-heartedness, rebellion, and apostasy of the individual himself. God's sacrament, seal, and promise are true though rejected and put away by man's unbelief, just as gold is gold though cast upon the dunghill or hung around a harlot's neck. God's Baptism is what His word says it is, even though it be bestowed upon many whose unbelief and disobedience render it of no saving effect to them. Have we been baptized? In that Baptism all the privileges, blessings, and hopes of the kingdom of God have been conferred upon us, and therein have been sealed to us the forgiveness of sins, the regeneration of our corrupt nature, and our translation out of darkness into God's marvellous light, if only we believe it and order ourselves accordingly. And herein hath the kindness and love of God our Saviour been manifested, that without any foregoing merit or righteousness of ours, but according to His mercy, He hath taken us through this bath of renewal and sprinkling from an evil conscience, so that now we have it assured and sealed unto us personally that there is no more condemnation, that we are new creatures in Christ Jesus,

and that salvation doth most certainly avail for us if only we believe, and walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Blessed, blessed fruit of the manifested kindness and philanthropy of God our Saviour!

3. *The Abundant Gift of the Holy Ghost.* The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of inspiration—the Spirit of enlightenment and sanctification—the Spirit of power and of a sound mind—the Spirit of comfort, joy, peace, consolation, and help for man's infirmities. It is the might and grace of God made effective in our souls—the Almighty Himself imparted to us to work in us the good pleasure of His own will. It is the very administration of Heaven set up within our own bodies as living temples of God. It is that divine and holy energy which enabled the apostles to speak with other tongues, and transformed them from timid and doubting souls into heroes of faith and zeal and courage, which no opposition, no pains, no prisons, no threatenings, could for one moment shake—a transfiguring power, which made them happy under stripes, in prisons, in fires, and in the most cruel of deaths, welcoming the breaking of their bones and the tearing of their whole bodies in pieces, only that they might enjoy Jesus Christ and the blessed comforts of their most holy faith. And this same Spirit is at our service and within the reach of our call. The word is that our heavenly Father is more willing to give His Spirit to them that ask Him than earthly parents to give good gifts unto their children. Nay, this Spirit is even now and always the possession and endowment of the

Church. From the day of Pentecost it has pulsated through all the ages down to this present, and, though oft grieved and resisted, yet the real author of all sanctification and Christian achievement that has ever blessed the world. It is the living power of divine grace, ever with and upon the Church, shed abundantly upon all who really believe and obey the Gospel—that very power by which we are created anew in Christ Jesus, working in us as the Spirit of adoption by which we are made the conscious children of God, and happy in Him as our everlasting Friend and Father.

4. And along with this is the still further blessedness of *heirship according to the hope of eternal life.* For if we be children, then are we heirs—heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. And the inheritance is secure. No one can come in before us and take it from us. And the possession itself is as secure as the title to it. It is reserved in heaven for us. It cannot depreciate nor waste nor be alienated. It is laid up for us where moth cannot corrupt nor thieves break through and steal. And it is a sublime portion when it comes. It is "*eternal life*"—not mere immortality, but immortality filled up with everything of blessedness; not only interminable being, but being in sublimest forms and noblest associations—being, like the being of Jesus, imperishable and glorious. What the Only-begotten of the Father obtains, the same are we to share with Him. We are to participate in His glory. We are to enter into the joy of our Lord. All that God has to bestow or that our nature can receive awaits us in

heaven. This is the Christian's hope; and this hope we have as an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast.

Now, with such undeserved and unspeakable kindness, love, mercy, and grace exercised toward us, shall we not also learn to be kind and charitable toward one another? Shall God our Saviour enact all this great good toward us, and we profit so little by it as not to reflect the same in our temper and spirit?

But, above all, shall our good Lord do all these great things for us, and bring to us such matchless grace and blessedness, and we let it all pass as nothing, unimproved, uncared for, and utterly neglected? Think, O man, of the kindness and grace of thy God and Saviour, and learn to appreciate the blessings He has brought to thee! Think what love and thanks thou owest to Him who has shown such matchless love to thee! Think what wrong thou doest to thine own soul by failing to respond in loving acceptance of His unspeakable grace! The dull earth breaks forth with flowers to the summer's sun; let not thy heart be barren of returns under all this genial radiance from thy God.

Sunday after Christmas.

GAL. 4 : 1–7 (Revised Version) : But I say that so long as the heir is a child, he differeth nothing from a bond-servant, though he is lord of all; but is under guardians and stewards until the term appointed of the father. So we also, when we were children, were held in bondage under the rudiments of the world: but when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father. So that thou art no longer a bond-servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.

LMOST every one can understand the difference between the condition of an heir to an estate while under age and the condition when he arrives at his majority. Before reaching the period of life at which the law recognizes one's mature manhood there is dependence and subjection. Guardians have custody both of the person and the estate, and the minor is necessarily under the direction and control of those appointed for the purpose. But when the point of maturity is reached, the ward becomes his own man, freed from his former dependence, and takes possession of his inheritance in his own right and name.

This order of things is taken up by the apostle as an illustration of the difference between the condition of the Church under the Old Testament and its con-

dition under the Gospel. Under the Levitical regulations it was like a child not yet of age, and the Mosaic system was to it as a tutor, guardian, and governor until it should come to full age under the Gospel. Some of the Galatian believers were of the opinion that Christians were still bound to observe the Levitical rites, since they certainly were of divine appointment. Against this idea the apostle is arguing. It is true enough that the laws governing in a case of nonage are no less authoritative and binding than those which hold after maturity is reached; but when the years of manhood arrive the laws peculiar to nonage have no further force; at least, the ward, having become of age, is no longer amenable to them. And so it was with the laws of Moses. They were divine, and they were authoritative and binding for the period they were intended to cover; but when that period expired, as it did with Christ, the old order of things expired with it, and quite other provisions took its place.

In the course of this argument the apostle brings out a number of important evangelic truths, full of comforting light and instruction, even apart from the point immediately under discussion. They may be classified under three heads:

I. Truths respecting the Redeemer;
II. Truths respecting the Redemption;
III. Truths respecting the Redeemed.

To these, then, let us direct our attention in their order, looking to God to help us in our contemplations.

I. Truths respecting the Redeemer.

There be some who think of the Saviour as nothing but a man. They agree that He was indeed a remarkable man—a great prophet, teacher, and reformer—but only a distinguished member of a class with many others. Here, however, we get a very different impression. The apostle speaks of Him as the *Redeemer*, as no one else is ever spoken of in the Scriptures. He speaks of Him as sent by the eternal God, born of a woman, born under the law, in a way to imply that He was not conceived in the ordinary course of generation, and that there was a time when He was elsewhere than in this world, other than a human being, and not under the law. This agrees with the Saviour's own account of Himself where He says that He was before Abraham, that He had glory with the Father before the world was, that He came forth from the Father, and that in a sense He was also in heaven at the same time that He was upon earth.

The apostle further speaks of Him as the *Son of God*. In a sense, God's covenant people under the law, and especially all true Christians, are called "sons of God," but never with that peculiar stress which everywhere connects with Christ's divine Sonship. Even in the text believers are spoken of as "sons," but in a way very clearly distinguishing between their sonship and that of the Lord Jesus. They get their sonship in and through Him by virtue of His redeeming work; His is not thus derivative, but original. They become sons by "adoption;" He is by nature and inherent right God's Son.

Theirs is a sonship acquired subsequent to their birth; His is by begetment from eternity. Hence He is often styled God's "only-begotten Son." The divine Sonship predicated of Him is a sonship which implies a divine nature—participation in the essence of the Father. So the Jews understood it, and condemned Christ as a basphemer because "He said God was His Father, *making Himself equal with God*" (John 5 : 18). And when the apostle here speaks of Him as the Son of God, and identifies the Holy Spirit by which believers are regenerated and sanctified as the Spirit of this Son, he plainly contemplates quite another and far more exalted being than any mere creature, man or angel—even "God of God, and Light of light, of one substance with the Father," and "over all God, blessed for ever" (Rom. 9 : 5).

According to the Scriptures, this Son of God existed long before He was born of a woman. They tell us that He was from all eternity, the outbeaming of the Father's glory and the very image of the Father's substance; that through Him God framed the ages; that He is, by name, nature, and office, "so much better than the angels;" that He often appeared in the form of God to the patriarchs and prophets as the Jehovah-Angel, the Word, Oracle, Interpreter, and Revealer of the divine will, who conversed with Adam in Paradise, shut up Noah in the ark, brought the Deluge on the ungodly world, called Abraham, rained destruction upon Sodom and Gomorrah, was seen of Jacob in his dream, spoke to Moses out of the burning bush, came down upon Sinai with the myriad chariots of God which blazed

from its thunder-shaken summits, went before the camp of Israel in the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night, sustained them with bread and water in the wilderness forty years, appeared before Joshua as the Captain of the Lord's hosts, was seen by Isaiah sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, and walked with Daniel's friends in the midst of the burning fiery furnace;—even the same whom Daniel himself beheld before the Ancient of Days, invested with dominion and glory and an everlasting kingdom over all peoples, nations, and languages, and to whom every knee is to bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and every tongue confess that He is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

And a glorious truth it is, dear friends, that no mere arm of flesh or finite mortal has been entrusted with the work of our redemption. The foundation of our hope is laid in the genuine adamantine rock. Jesus understood it, and Jesus says that "God gave *His only-begotten Son*" to be our Redeemer.

But the apostle further speaks of this "Only-begotten of the Father," this "Prince of Life" and "Lord of Glory," not only as "sent forth" to redeem men, but as sent in a peculiar and surprising manner —"*born of a woman, born under the law.*" This sets forth a human nature in our Saviour additional to the divine; which is another truth of vital importance. While some would rob Him of His Deity, there were some in the early days of the Church who sought to rob Him of His humanity. Their doctrine was that His manhood was only an appear-

ance, a phantasm, not a reality; that He only *seemed* to be a man, and only *seemed* to eat and drink and suffer and die; that His whole human life was only spectacular, a make-believe, a show, a shadow, with nothing of real humanity in it. Others held that He did not derive His human body from any woman, but that He brought it with Him from heaven. But had either of these wild notions been true, it would have been impossible for the inspired apostle to say that "God sent forth His Son, *born of a woman*." He was the Son of God in His human nature too—a begetment of the Holy Ghost, but a begetment *in humanity*. Christ was "born of a woman;" and that which is born of a woman, whatever else it may be, must be a partaker of her nature, and her nature is *human*.

The apostle would accordingly teach us that our blessed Redeemer is *true man*, sin only excepted, as well as true God, and that He is both in one Person. Nor was his human nature any less essential to His qualities as a Redeemer than His divinity. If He were only a man, there could be no merit in His obedience beyond what He needed for His own standing before God, and so He could be no Redeemer for us; and if He were only God, He could not suffer in our stead or render satisfaction for sin in and through the nature which had done the sinning. He could not be to us "a faithful and merciful High Priest to make reconciliation for the sins of the people" without being "in all things made like unto His brethren." He needed to be "the Son of man" as well as "the Son of God." He Himself specially

emphasizes the fact that He is, and operates for our redemption, as "*the Son of man.*" In Him all humanity was summed up and represented in completest form, that He might lift and redeem it—not, indeed, by the energies of mere humanity, but by its union with that eternal power and Godhead which belonged to Him as the *Son of God.* Nay, the whole scheme of our redemption breaks down without this doctrine of Christ's two natures. The Creed of Athanasius witnesses that "it is necessary to everlasting salvation that we believe rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ; for the right faith is, that we believe and confess that He is *God and man*—God, of the substance of the Father, begotten before all worlds; and man, of the substance of His mother, born in the world, perfect God and perfect man."—Note now,

II. The Truths respecting Redemption.

The Son of God was sent "to redeem them that were under the law."

The phase of this redemption immediately in the writer's view was deliverance from the hard, burdensome, and oppressive obligations of the Levitical code. The heart and essence of that code was Christ and His redemptive work exhibited in typical rites and ordinances, anticipative of subsequent realities. By their dutiful attendance upon those observances, with firm faith in what they signified, the ancient saints participated in the blessings of spiritual redemption. They knew no other way of salvation, and were tied to this as an essential tutelage and dis

cipline during the time of the Church's nonage. The spiritual benefits, however, did not lie in the "carnal ordinances." Though derived through them, they came from the mediatorial work of Christ, which they typified. Apart from Christ, they were mere "dead works." The typical system was of value. It is hard to see how the way to a proper understanding and reception of the Christ could have been adequately bridged without it. Even to this day we cannot enter into the depths and heart of the Gospel except through the ideas and light of the ancient sacrificial system. But even at its best, it was a heavy yoke upon the necks of those who were under it. If it were obligatory now, it would be utterly out of the power of man to go halfway in fulfilling its requirements. Yet it could only be voided by the coming of the realities which it typically anticipated. If Jesus and His mediatorial work were not "the true" to which the old rites pointed, and which they in "figure" represented, then that law still binds, and all men are in the guilt and condemnation of not observing it, with no power to make things any better. Without the Christ come, it still holds; but in Him, and by the realization in His person, life, and offices of what it foreshadowed, the Church is now redeemed from any further bondage in that direction. (See Acts 15 : 1–31.)

But this is simply one phase of the great redemption Christ was sent to accomplish. He came to redeem not only from the ceremonial law, but from the whole penalty of moral law as well. Indeed, there could be no redemption from the one without

redemption from the other also. Whether under the Jewish law or not, there still is a law by which all men are bound. There is such a thing as eternal right, and to that immutable standard every one is amenable. We are accountable beings. Inevitable responsibility is upon us. Those who have the Scriptures have the law there written; and those who have not the Scriptures have it written in themselves and in the nature of things. And under that law all men are sinners. No mere man has ever kept it or can keep it. Do what we will, and labor and sacrifice to the utmost of our power, every day and hour of conscious being only increases the sum of undischarged indebtedness to it. We are thus doubly "under the law"—under invincible obligation to fulfil it, and in its clutches for not having kept it. Indifference and false teaching may obscure one's sense of the situation, but wherever a human being exists, there also is a conscience more or less disturbed with felt guilt. In every soul, however stupefied, there are echoes of the curse of a broken law; and times come when those echoes appall the proudest and make the stoutest tremble. Do as we may, there is something in the soul which prophesies to it of judgment to come. Mysterious images rise which will not down, and horrid sin-stains appear which will not wash out. People may plunge into excesses, try to hide themselves in atheistic falsehoods, or seek in vice and abandon to drown out their boding fears; but the demon of condemnation pursues them and the serpent of an evil conscience stings them. They may brazenly deny it, but in

their secret hearts and more sober moments they feel it nevertheless. And when the light of truth shines in upon the soul, this sense of sin is terrible, and killing to all hope. Paul had been one of the strictest of religionists, and thought for the time that he was all right; but when the commandment came and his eyes opened to the real nature of the law, sin loomed up like a mountain and utterly crushed out of him all thought of redemption by his own works. Nor is an infant more helpless in a giant's arms than mortal man under the inexorable law of God. He is its prisoner. In body, soul, and spirit he is held by it under demands and penalties which he cannot meet, and which are daily accumulating upon him beyond all power of escape. It is not because God's requirements are unjust or in excess of what is right and reasonable. "The law is holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good" (Rom. 7 : 12); but man has so involved and disabled himself by sin that by the deeds of the law there is no more salvation for him. He is under the law, and inevitably doomed to perish under it unless some competent order of things from some other source comes to his rescue.

But such a new order has found place. "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin," hath achieved. As the text expresses it, "God sent forth His Son, that He might redeem them that were under the law."

How He was to redeem them is here very briefly explained. It is said, however, that though the Son

of God, He was put "*under the law*"—in the same relation to it as those whom He was to redeem. He took place with them, that by a perfect obedience He might so exhaust all the duties and penalties of the law as to leave no more power in it to hold and condemn those who are in Him. The word "*redeem*" also means as much. It gives the idea of buying back by the payment of an equivalent—the recovering of one from bondage by paying the price. And so it was that Christ procured liberation from the condemnation of the law. He paid the ransom-price of a perfect obedience and satisfaction. Hence it is said, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, *being made a curse for us*" (3 : 13). That is to say, He who knew no sin was made sin, or put in the position of one on whom all sin was concentrated and penally visited, to the end that in Him we might stand to the law as if we had never sinned at all (2 Cor. 5 : 21). Hence it is further written that "by His own blood He obtained eternal redemption for us," having "through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God" (Heb. 9 : 11–15).

There is a redemption of *price*, and there is a redemption of *power;* and both are necessary to the complete redemption of man. The redemption of *price* is that which was accomplished by the spotless obedience and sacrificial death of the incarnate Son of God. By that the debt was paid. By that the clean remission of sins was procured. By that condemnation was for ever taken away from those who are "in Christ Jesus." The redemption of *power* is that which began in Christ's victory over death, as-

cension into heaven, session at the right hand of God, the sending of the Holy Ghost, and the commitment to Him of all authority in heaven and earth as Head over all things to the Church; but it is to be consummated only when He comes in power and great glory to raise His people from their graves and disabilities, cleanse the earth of all usurpations, and set up His everlasting kingdom. Hence He Himself tells us that when the signs of the end of this present world begin to appear we shall "look up and lift up our heads, for that our redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21 : 28).

This, then, is the redemption which the Son of God was sent to accomplish.—A few words now on,

III. The Truths respecting the Redeemed.

First of all, they are no longer obligated to the old Levitical observances. The coming of the Son of God has rendered all that code superannuated and dead. What more have we to do with types and shadows and carnal ordinances, which never could "make him that did the service perfect as pertaining to the conscience," now that we have the blessed reality? Faith in the ever-living Christ, and not the keeping of carnal commandments, is now our calling. If the stiff-necked Jew will not have Christ, and is determined to stick to "the weak and beggarly elements" to which the Church in its nonage was so long in bondage, we cannot help it. In Christ Jesus we are no longer "children of the bond-woman, but of the free;" and our business is to "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and

not to be entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Gal. 5 : 1). It is bane to the Church of Jesus for it to give place to an obsolete ceremonialism in hope of attaining superior holiness. Let those who have come to Gospel freedom beware of it, lest the redemption which Christ hath wrought should be to them of none effect.

In like manner, they are redeemed from the condemnation due to sin. Guilty as people may be, by accepting Christ as their hope and Redeemer and submitting themselves to Him they stand with and through Him as if they were righteous. Nay, they are righteous in His righteousness. Believing on Him, the judgment is passed and we are not condemned. Hence the apostle proclaims, "There is therefore no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8 : 1). This is the true blessedness of the Gospel. And we fail to understand it if we do not see in it the utter doing away in Christ with all further answerableness for our sins, provided only that we embrace and trust in Him as our Lord and Saviour; for He hath redeemed us from the curse of the moral law, as well as from the bondage to the Levitical observances.

Furthermore, they receive *the adoption of sons*. The apostolic word is plain: "As many as received Him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name" (John 1 : 12). Their sonship is not like that of their Redeemer, for He is by nature, and not by adoption, the Son of God; but still, they are transferred from the condition of aliens and strangers to that of ac-

knowledged members of God's family. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be" (1 John 3 : 2). This, however, is true: that, through Christ, we are recognized as partakers of His own Sonship, and have all the liberties and privileges of holy childship.

And as sons we are blessed with the spirit of sonship. The Spirit of the only-begotten Son is given to us for this very purpose, that we may confidently look up to the great God and say "Our Father" with all the loving assurance of dear children.

And if children, then heirs—"heirs of God through Jesus Christ." Apart from the Gospel redemption we are heirs only of condemnation and eternal exile from God and from the glory of His power. There is nothing good in the universe to which we can point and say, This is my lasting treasure. But by the redemption that is in Christ all things are ours. Heirs of God and joint-heirs with the only-begotten Son, there is nothing that can minister to the eternal good of man which we do not inherit. We may have privations now, as Jesus had in this world, and we may have to bear our crosses as He bore His. But these days of nonage and minority are fast passing away. The kingdom cometh. Soon we shall get possession of our inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading in the heavens.

New Year.

GAL. 3 : 23–29 : But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterward be revealed.

Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ.

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female : for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

THE history of our world is divided into two great chronological cycles: to wit, the period before Christ, and the period since Christ. The one was the era of law, of preparation, of waiting; the other is the era of the Gospel, of grace, of inheritance in the Lord Jesus.

It is our privilege to live in the latter. The Saviour has come; the Christ has been born; the new and better age has dawned; and its superior light and favors are ours.

The law had its offices. As the great geologic eras were essential to prepare the earth for the habitation of man, so the eras of the law and the ancient dispensations were necessary to prepare the way for

the nobler era of the Gospel. The spiritual world has its strata as well as the material. Physically, we live on departed worlds, without which we could not exist at all; and spiritually, we have our superior privileges as the fruit of dispensations long since departed. This thought is distinctly involved in the text and its surroundings.

Paul represents the dispensation of the law as past, and yet as serving a very necessary purpose and as part of the process for the attainment of those more precious things which now are fully open to us. The era of legal bondage is indeed past to them that believe in Christ. But still, without the law going before there would be no evangelic freedom and no entry upon the higher blessings for which it was an important part of the preparation, and still is. As the apostle writes, "Before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should after be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster; for ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

It would appear, then, that it is the aim and intent of all God's dispensations toward man to bring us into *union and oneness with Jesus Christ.* Every

man in his right place is "in Christ," "baptized into Christ," has "put on Christ," is a part of Christ. If we have not yet come to this, we are not yet what we ought to be, and not in that state for which we have our being, our years on earth, and God's various favors. It is meant that we should be one with that Saviour whose incarnation we have just been celebrating.

That union is not a thing of form only, but a oneness of life and spirit—an actual engrafting into Christ as a branch is in the vine. It is an implantation of Christ in us and of us in Christ, so as to make us "members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." Reason cannot fully understand it. Sense cannot trace it. No mere will or agency of man can produce it. It is a mystery. But it is a reality. Christ was born into the world that He might also be born in us and superinduce upon our human being a divine life, which is Himself living in us and we living in Him.

For the accomplishment of this union *the tutorage of the law* is necessary. It was so in the history of the world, and it is so in the history of the individual soul. This experience varies in different people according to their varying circumstances and characters. With some it is slow, silent, almost imperceptible, like the dawn of the morning. Light enters the soul, and darkness quietly vanishes before it. The man begins to know himself, he cannot tell how; conscience becomes more strict and accurate in its judgments and prompt and powerful in its decisions; the sinfulness of sin is made apparent, and

the mind is gradually led on by easy stages to the reception of the Gospel and trust in Jesus. With others the process is more summary and disturbing. Conviction comes like a flash, filling the soul with alarm. The darkness is suddenly lit up as by a supernatural light; the thunders of divine condemnation are heard; an overwhelming sense of danger seizes the mind; and the cry of anguish is wrung from the heart: "What must I do to be saved?" In one case it is the gentle stream flowing smoothly onward in its course; and in the other it is the raging torrent bursting all bounds and sweeping with violence over rocks and precipices. But in either case the substance is the same, and the result also. In both the law has the person under its tutelage, and is doing its work of bringing the soul to its only refuge.

The instrument of this union with Christ is *faith*—not human works, not our goodness and reforms, not ceremonies, but simple *faith*—trust, confidence, unconditional reposing of the soul upon Jesus. The Galatian Christians were "all one in Christ," and "all the children of God, *by faith in Christ Jesus*." Sacraments have their place. There is baptizing into Christ in the putting on of Christ. But sacraments are not works of man. They are modes of Christ's approach to us, by which He presents Himself to our faith; and they fail of any saving virtue where they do not meet with faith to see, receive, and confide in what they bring and offer. Just as the Word imparts salvation to no one except to him who understands and believes and receives it, so sacra-

ments benefit only those who believingly accept and confide in what they testify and bear. Where the element of faith is wanting there can be no true and living union with Christ, and no salvation. It is only "to *them that believe on His name*" that He giveth power to become the sons of God. God gave His only-begotten Son that whosoever *believeth on Him* might not perish. He that *believeth on the Son* hath life, and he that *believeth not* the Son hath not life. Abraham *believed God*, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Being justified *by faith*, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. The law cannot justify. It can do no more than show us our need of a Saviour, and drive us to Him. And when that Saviour is seen we must accept Him and trust Him; and by that faith we are conjoined with Him and made partakers of His salvation.

In this union with Christ *all conventional and natural distinctions are merged.* "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." Christ came as the Saviour for all classes of people, of all nationalities, in whatever condition in life, of whatever sex or age. The Gospel does not obliterate these distinctions, but it does offer and confer equal rights and privileges upon all who open their hearts to it and accept of the Saviour it proclaims. It puts the Jew and the Greek, the master and his servant, the man and the woman, on the same common level of right, privilege, necessity, and duty. In Christ one may not be as high as another, but all together constitute one fellowship—one body of

redeemed humanity, pervaded with the one life and partakers of the one common salvation. One is as capable of divine childship as the other, and, being "baptized into Christ," they are all children together of the same Father, members of the same family, one body in the Lord.

Very great also are *the privileges of this union with Christ*. It involves a direct participation in all that belongs to Christ as the Mediator of the new covenant. His Spirit is given to them that are His. His righteousness becomes their righteousness; His life, their life; His victory, their victory; His inheritance, their inheritance; and His standing before God, their standing.

By union with Christ we become partakers of His *divine Sonship*. "Ye are all *the children of God* by faith in Christ Jesus." Christ is pre-eminently the Son of God, even the only-begotten Son; but by faith, which unites to Him, we become sons also—not in the same sense and degree, but still in a most true and blessed sense. Oneness with Jesus involves participation in His sonship. Though He is the only-*begotten* Son, yet our union with Him puts us also in the relation of sons. The wife of a son, though taken from another family, still comes into the relation of a daughter by virtue of her union with that son; and so the Church is the chosen bride of Christ, and by virtue of her union with Him she comes into the same family with Him and shares with Him the same childship with Himself.

Power thus goes out from Christ to make all those who receive Him the sons of God. It is sometimes

called an adopted sonship, to indicate that it does not come in the course of nature; but it is a real introduction into the family of God, giving to believers the right to call God *Father*, and to stand to Him in the relation of true children. A father who approves his son and his son's marriage does thereby accept and acknowledge that son's wife as also a member of his family, and as rightfully sharing with that son in all the favors and honors pertaining to him. She is that father's daughter, because she is that son's wife; and so believers are truly God's children, because they are united in oneness with God's only-begotten Son. Hence the joyous congratulation of the apostle John: "*Beloved, now are we the sons of God*" (1 John 3 : 2); and hence the declaration of Paul: "Ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God" (Rom. 8 : 14–16). "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" (1 John 3 : 1). When Melanchthon was dying he said to the friends around his bedside, "I have these words continually before me: 'The world received Him not, but as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believed on His name.'" It was the chief joy of his departing spirit that the Son of God has become our Brother, thereby making us the children of his divine Father—the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

By union with Christ we also become *heirs with*

faithful Abraham. Sonship with God is not an empty honor, for "if children, *then heirs*, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ" (Rom. 8:17); or, as stated in the text, "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and *heirs* according to the promise." God's promise to Abraham was to be a God unto him, and to his seed after him, and to give him and them an everlasting inheritance, on condition that they would obey Him. But they did not obey. There was but one man of all Abraham's posterity who did fully obey. That one was Jesus Christ, pre-eminently that *Seed* of Abraham in whom all the promises centred. But, having fulfilled the conditions in His own person, He became heir to all that was promised to Abraham. In Him all the gracious promises, which none other could claim by reason of sin, do therefore hold. And as all who truly believe in Christ are made one with Christ, so they in Christ become heirs with Him to the whole promise to Abraham and his seed. In the language of Paul, they become "Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." That promise includes all the blessings offered in the Gospel—all that Christianity holds out as the portion of them that believe, particularly a divine and eternal inheritance.

Heirship always involves the idea of inheritance. Its value depends upon two things: the dignity and possessions of the person whose heirs we are, and the nearness of that heirship to those possessions. It is of no value to be the heir of a mean, poor, and obscure man; but it is a very different thing to be the heir of a lord, a king, a man rich in place and

possessions. There is also an heirship which is so far off, and which has so many others that stand in advance of it, as to be worth very little. The heir-apparent is in a position of far greater importance than merely the heir-presumptive. The heir-apparent has precedence, and necessarily takes the possession if he be living at the time it entails, and the heir-presumptive in that case gets nothing. It is only in case of forfeiture or death on the part of the heir-apparent that the heir-presumptive can come in at all. But in both these respects the heirship of believers is one of most precious worth. They are the children of God, and therefore heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. God Himself was the patrimony of Abraham. The promise said, *I will be a God to thee*. That is to say, all that God can be to a human being He engaged to be to Abraham—his Protector, his Preserver, his Redeemer, and his exceeding great Reward. And all true believers are heirs of the same promise. God is their patrimony. They are the heirs to all His goodness and grace toward faithful Abraham and toward His only-begotten Son. They do not yet possess all the fulness of the blessing, but they are the *heirs* of it.

And they are not only heirs-presumptive, but heirs-apparent. There is no one with title in advance of theirs. They stand first. The whole possession entails directly upon them. When the time comes for the fruition of the inheritance, it is theirs in preference to all others. They have not to wait to see if others will forfeit that they may come in. They are themselves the first. As the first-born has the

first claim and stands the nearest to the inheritance, so we stand if we be Christ's. The Church is the congregation of the first-born. All the rights of primogeniture pertain to it and to every member of it; and they will not fail to inherit.

And when we come to think of that inheritance—of what it consists, of the glory which it embraces, of its attributes of certainty, durableness, infinitude, and eternity—our understanding is overwhelmed, our highest thoughts are surpassed, our sublimest imaginings are but poor grovelling things in comparison with the reality. "Now are we the sons of God, but it doth not yet appear what we shall be."

Abraham looked for a city, a firmly-founded city, whose Maker and Builder is God; and as heirs with him of the same promise that same city is for us. But who may tell its glory and blessedness or the excellency of them that enter it? John beheld that city, and has told us astonishing things touching its eternal splendor. Prophets and saints have sung of it in many a golden line and thrilling measure. Orators, touched with all the fire of sacred inspiration, have told of it until their hearers were carried up as in chariots of fire to bathe in its glory. And yet we know it only in part, and can only tell it in part. High over all earthly language, eloquence, song, and power to conceive, flames its eternal light and loveliness.

And yet, with all its streets of gold, and gates of pearl, and jewel walls, and light of God, and river of peace, and water of life, and songs of triumph, and feasts of love, and fulness of bliss, and sinless im-

mortal inhabitants, it is ours, our glorious home, our eternal inheritance!—ours by faith in Jesus, and ours for ever.

Dear friends, what a position of privilege has been vouchsafed to us! Before faith came no such freedom and hope belonged to man. It is only the years of grace to which we are indebted for the opportunity of such blessed union with the Son of God and such joyous heirship. What a happy thing, then, that another of these years is opening upon us —a year of the Lord, a year of still proffered mercy and inheritance of the promise! Hail it, therefore, with joy and gratitude. Shake off the chains of the old bondage and enter into your sonship and liberty. Jesus has obeyed the law for all of us. His flesh was wounded that our souls might live. He became the Son of man that we might be the sons of God. And His name is JESUS, because He saveth us from our sins. Let us believe it. Let us have confidence in the holy record. Let us not falter in our faith. Let us hold fast the precious promise.

To-day again Jesus proposes himself to us in His holy sacrament—the special sacrament of our life-union with Him. Let us come to Him in the fulness of trust and confidence in what He has undertaken and done for us. Let us begin the year with Him, and set out upon its untried course as heirs through hope of His everlasting kingdom. Here He would seal to us that blessed heirship. And with the old bars and barriers of the law surmounted through His blood, the way is now open for us to enter into the holiest of all.

Sunday after New Year.

1 Pet. 4: 12–19 (Revised Text): Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial among you, which cometh upon you to prove you, as though a strange thing happened unto you: but inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, rejoice; that at the revelation of his glory also ye may rejoice with exceeding joy. If ye are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are ye; because the Spirit of glory and the Spirit of God resteth upon you. For let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evil-doer, or as a meddler in other men's matters: but if a man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name. For the time is come for judgment to begin at the house of God: and if it begin first at us, what shall be the end of them that obey not the Gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

TWO things especially are pictured to us in this passage:

I. A State of Suffering;
II. What to Do with it.

May God help us to consider them to our edification!

I. A State of Suffering.

The glad history of the Christmas season, so full of light and blessing, is not all hosanna. Notes of

a different tone intermingle with it. When the Christ was born the great red dragon was on his feet and moving to devour Him. The new-born King was a persecuted fugitive and exile in His infancy. The very ground which vibrated to the songs of angels was baptized with the blood of babes—unconscious martyrs to the infant Saviour who had come among them. A malignant and bloody tyrant was upon the throne of Judah, who, to make sure of striking the life of Mary's Child, sent forth and slew all the children in and around Bethlehem from two years old and under. The horrid butchery seemed to startle Rachel from her tomb to lament and weep again, refusing to be comforted, because her children were not.

It was much the same with believers when the New Testament Church commenced its history. Those who had persecuted Jesus to death naturally turned their hatred of Him upon His followers. The wonder of the Resurrection and the powerful outpouring of the Holy Ghost after the Ascension made many converts, who for a time retained their places in the synagogues and accustomed associations. But soon the priests and officials determined to suppress the growing sect, pronounced its adherents heretical and apostate from Moses and Israel, and became as violent against them as they had been against Christ Himself. Christians were excluded from the synagogues, outlawed from respectable Jewish society, imprisoned, disinherited, stoned to death, and spoiled of their peace, for believing in Jesus as the true Messiah. Fathers cast off and cursed their children,

and refused ever to see them again, because they were Christians. Unless they gave up faith in Jesus and forsook the assemblies in which He was worshipped, they were denied entrance into the temple and banished from the altar and their homes. Everywhere they were treated as unclean pests, far less tolerable than the heathen themselves. Great distress, both of soul and body, was the result. The times of the Maccabean sufferers seemed to have come back. "Some of them were tortured" by the most malignant devices. "Others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonments: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth." They could scarcely live any more in Palestine or where the Jews were in the ascendency, and many of them were scattered abroad to find lodging-place and shelter as best they could in the countries and cities of the Gentiles. And in the time that Peter wrote this Epistle, which was about thirty years after the death of Christ, large numbers of these people, expatriated for their faith, were found dispersed abroad throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia Minor, and Bithynia.

It was to these persecuted wanderers that the sympathizing apostle addressed this Epistle, by which he sought to direct and comfort them in their troubles, to encourage them in their Christian faith and profession, and to strengthen them under their sufferings. He was fully awake to the severity of the affliction

which was upon them, and describes it in very vigorous terms. He was at Babylon at the time of his writing. The locality naturally reminded him of Nebuchadnezzar's "burning fiery furnace," heated "seven times more than it was wont to be heated," into which Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were thrown because they would not worship the golden image. (See Daniel 3.) Into such a burning fiery trial he beheld his scattered brethren cast for the like reason, that they were true to their convictions. But as the three heroic Hebrew children were upheld and preserved in the midst of the furnace-fires, and came forth all the purer and more honored for having gone through that burning test, he was sure that the same God was sufficient to sustain these scattered sufferers and to turn their trials to their greater benefit and glory if they would take them rightly. Hence this Epistle, and especially that part of it which is now before us.

Of course the condition of things has much changed since those days. In the more enlightened parts of the world at least the law recognizes and protects Christians, and allows them the free exercise of their convictions without abridgment of their civil rights and privileges. The Pauls may now preach without fear of the courts, the mob, the beasts at Ephesus, or the state block at Rome. It seldom happens now, except in countries where Rome or Islam dominates, that any one is outlawed by the government, bereft of his patrimony, deprived of his liberty, driven from his home, or put under forfeit of his life simply because he has come to be an ear-

nest believer in Jesus as his only Saviour. The old baptism of blood and fire has largely disappeared. But we are not therefore to conclude that true Christians are any more at home in this world now than then, or that all fiery trials for them have ceased. What the apostle said of his scattered brethren is ever true, that we are "as strangers and pilgrims" on the earth. The people of God of every age have equal need of the testing and discipline of trial, and in one form or another it comes upon every one. It may not come with the imperial sword in hand, commanding us to give up or die; but the cross which the Saviour bore distributes itself to all His faithful followers. If it comes in no other forms, it comes in the ordinary cares, trials, vicissitudes, and sorrows of life, and in many sore temptations, while Satan hurls his fiery darts and seeks to rob us of our peace. Over all the earth scenes of Christian suffering and distress are to be found quite as afflictive as "the fiery trial" which was upon those to whom the apostle wrote. And times of affliction of some sort are sure to come with more or less severity to every one of us.

Do we, then, find ourselves in trouble? The sympathizing apostle tells us,

II. What to Do with It.

1. *We are not to think it strange.* It may surprise natural feeling that good people should suffer, and suffer the more because they are good. The afflicted believers to whom Peter was writing might wonder why they should be denied the privileges of the

temple and synagogue, driven from their friends and country, and put to all sorts of sorrowful privation and distress, just because earnestly trying to serve God and to be true to His gracious revelations. It doubtless seemed very contradictory that He who had shed His blood for them, and to whom belonged all power in heaven and on earth, should leave them to such an ordeal for the very reason that they loyally adhered to Him. We can imagine with what half-chiding appeals they often looked up to Him and said, "Master, carest Thou not that we perish?" And so when severe trials come upon Christians now, and one sorrow is added to another, the worn spirit is apt to question and wonder what evil has been done to merit such chastisement, and how God can be just and merciful in assigning such a lot to those who are most anxious to serve Him. They see wicked men, despisers and neglecters of religion and blasphemers of God, getting on in prosperity and peace, and themselves kept in the hottest fires, and it perplexes them. They cannot understand it. It confounds them. It makes them suspect that, after all, there is some mistake. It seems like "a strange thing" which they know not how to construe.

But this is no way to cope with our afflictions. We touch on atheistic ground and jeopard our whole position as Christians when we begin to worry about them as something unaccountable and anomalous. The truth is that there is nothing strange about it. The very best of men are often the greatest sufferers. It cannot be otherwise. In a world like this, so alien to God, so disordered by sin, and so deeply subject

to the devil's sway, the wonder would be if good and pious people, all whose principles are so adverse to its spirit, should not suffer. It is a sort of law that nothing good can ever come except by sacrifices and hardships. If the earth is to yield its fruits, somebody must toil and sweat. The civilization we enjoy has been procured at mighty costs. Lakes of blood have been shed to secure what liberty and piety the world possesses. Christ could not plant the Gospel except at the surrender of His life. The Church could not be maintained and propagated, or the purchased salvation be carried and made available for the nations, except as disciples should peril their lives and endure the loss of all things. "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." The cross cannot triumph without people to bear it. And the strangest thing would be if victory should come without suffering and conflict.

Besides, afflictions are part of the divine discipline to develop and prepare us for our destiny. Even the Captain of our salvation was made perfect through sufferings. Every branch that beareth fruit requires to be purged, that it may bring forth more fruit. Gold needs to be taken through the crucible, that it may lose its dross and come forth in its proper purity and brightness. The oak must feel the storms and blasts and frosts of winter to compact its fibre and build up its giant strength. Abraham's faith and Job's unswerving fidelity never could have shone forth with such lustre but for the sore trials they were made to endure. Virtue must be tested that it may prove itself genuine and grow into the greater

sturdiness. Clouds and darkness are as necessary as bright daylight in the world of grace as well as the world of nature. Endless sunshine would be the worst abnormity. It belongs to the divine plan, illustrated in the history of all saints and everywhere set forth in the Scriptures, that we should have trials and sorrows in this world, and that our entrance into the kingdom should lie "through much tribulation." Nothing happens by chance. God's appointment, permission, and providence are in all that comes to pass. Every particular is taken account of by Him, and could not be apart from His will. It may be through the wickedness of others that our troubles come; but still God allows it to be so, and without Him the affliction could not come. It is not accident. It is no strange happening. It is all measured and calculated in heaven. And we mistake and put ourselves at a great disadvantage if we view it in any other light.

2. And as we are not to be astonished at our sufferings, so we are *not to allow ourselves to be depressed by them.* Loss of place, property, reputation, friends, liberty, or life itself, incurred in the service of Christ, is a great honor. Having to suffer for our faith makes us participant in the Christ-work. It is Christ Himself still suffering in His members, the filling out of what remains, that His redemption, purchased with His blood, may go into full effect. It puts us in position to act the Christ in the same redemptive cause which brings hope and salvation to the lost. So really are we joined to our Saviour in what we suffer for Him that what is done to us He

counts done to Himself. There is no supplementing of His saving merit in what His people suffer, but, according to Paul, it is in some sense a filling up of that which is left of the afflictions of Christ (Col. 1 : 24), and hence a participation in His work of redeeming the children of men.

There is therefore a Christly exalting of us when we are made to suffer for Christ's sake which calls for rejoicing rather than depression. It really lifts into a divine fellowship with our Redeemer in His redemptive sufferings. It elevates to an office with Christ, and makes us participant in the Christ-office itself, which must needs be an honor and a joy to every one who deeply loves Him.

It is a sweet thing for the soul to be a sharer with Christ in any particular, and it is the nature of love gladly to share with its object in what is sorrowful and afflictive as well as in what is pleasant and agreeable. What is that love worth which would not cheerfully suffer with the dear object to which it cleaves, and esteem affliction sweeter with him than any pleasure without him? And the apostle only refers to a common principle when he calls upon us to rejoice in what we suffer for Christ's sake, inasmuch as it is simply a sharing of the adverse fortune of Him without whom our souls languish.

And as all men honor a devotion which gladly cleaves to its object in misfortune and trial, so there is special honor and reward going along with what we endure for Christ's sake. Cleaving to Him through adversity, we shall have all the higher satisfaction when it comes to the day of prosperity and

triumph. Suffering with Him, we shall also be glorified with Him. He is not to be always in humiliation and affliction. There is a time of glory coming beyond all power of man to describe. And when that glory is revealed, then those who had fellowship in His sufferings shall have corresponding fellowship in His honors and triumphs.

A chance thus opens to us of adding transcendently to our everlasting glory, which we should enter with thankfulness and joy rather than with complaint and bowed heads. The apostle singles it out as a particular blessedness when we are calumniated and reproached for being Christians. To suffer for Christ is a real glory. It is the very Spirit of glory and of God come upon us to swell the sum of our eternal rejoicing. It is a credit and an honor set upon us here already in this world which is to open out into sublimities of eternal distinction. And for these reasons we are not to lament and despond in what we suffer for our Lord, but rather to "count it all joy" and a blessed good fortune that at the revelation of His glory we also may share in the triumph.

3. But we are to be very particular to *see to it that our afflictions are not procured by our own fault.* Many suffer as murderers, as thieves, as evil-doers, as meddlers in other people's matters. People's own lusts and passions often bring them to grief. Indeed, by far the greatest amount of trouble and sorrow in this world is the direct result of people's own sins and indiscretions. They will indulge themselves contrary to the laws of righteousness, and launch out according to their own fancies, regardless of consequences;

and the result is great suffering. All wrong has its penalties even in this world, and when men give themselves to the wrong they must expect to meet with misfortune.

But when people suffer for their sins, it is their shame, not their honor. "What glory is it if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye take it patiently?" A man who has brought himself into trouble, sickness, distress, and ruin by his own violations of right we may pity, but his sufferings are no credit to him. If he gets into prison, or gets a halter about his neck, or is made an outcast from society, in consequence of his crimes, it is his disgrace, and no submissiveness to it on his part can entitle him to honor on earth or in heaven. If people impertinently intrude themselves in matters which do not concern them, and get hurt by it, it is what they deserve, and they must not expect God or man to sympathize with them as sufferers for righteousness' sake.

It is a stigma and a disgrace for any one to be a sufferer by reason of his own evil-doing, but such suffering on the part of one who professes to be a Christian is tenfold more disreputable. For a professed follower of Christ to give occasion for suffering as a murderer, a thief, an evil-doer, or as a meddler in other men's matters is a scandal to Christianity as well as to himself, and he must not expect to be blessed and rewarded for it. Rather let him humble himself in penitential shame, and earnestly pray God to forgive him that he may not perish for ever. Suffering innocently for Christ's sake takes

hold on heaven, but suffering for our own faults and guilt is the prelibation of hell, for which there is neither comfort nor consolation except in honest contrition and self-abasement. Nor can we at all handle ourselves to our credit and comfort in affliction except as we are careful to see to it that our sufferings are from no wrong-doings of our own.

4. However afflictive our lot as Christians, we are *diligently to consider how much worse it might be.* The sufferings of those to whom Peter wrote were peculiarly heavy and sharp. We can hardly at this day form a conception of the intense burning of the fiery trial that was upon them. For clinging to the Messiah they were violently severed from Messiah's chosen people. For the hope of Israel they were banished from Israel, from Israel's temple, and from all the sacred ordinances which were the joy and strength of their fathers. For believing the promises and cleaving to Him in whom they all centred they were cut off and cursed as no longer of the children of the covenant, and savagely spurned as unclean blasphemers of the God of Israel. But a far sorer misfortune was maturing for the wicked ones who thus wronged and afflicted them. The time had come when Jerusalem was to be judged for its sins; when the blood of all the prophets shed from the foundation of the world was to be required of that generation; when scenes of horror, carnage, and death at which the soul sickens were to come, with complete destruction to the whole Jewish polity. Judgment was about to begin at God's house. It was only a little in advance that these scattered ones

had been severed from the doomed city. And if the beginning of the judgment so sorely affected the loving and devoted *friends* of Jesus, what would be the end of the malignants who murdered Him? If such poignant griefs were attendant upon *salvation*, what would be the terribleness of woe in the coming wrath and condemnation? Josephus mingled in those scenes of woe, and has written of them; and we have only to refer to his narration to realize how light and trifling were the sorrows of these dispersed Christians compared with the awful horrors which attended the last end of their persecutors. Sore as the trial was, it was yet a marvellous mercy in comparison with the doom that impended over those from whom their sorrows came.

And so it is in every case of Christian suffering. It is never so severe but it might be worse. Hard as it may be to bear it, it is nothing alongside of what is appointed to them that obey not the Gospel of God. If the lot of the righteous is marked with heavy sorrows, it is Paradise itself in comparison with the portion of the wicked and ungodly. Be our trials what they may, there still is every reason for us to thank and glorify God that He has privileged us to suffer as Christians, rather than encounter the doom of the godless and unbelieving. Better suffer reproach for Christ's name than condemnation from His judgment throne. Better bear earth's heaviest cross than hell's lightest punishment.

5. Above all, we are to *bear in mind that there is a faithful God above us.* "Affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the

ground." There is a wise, good, and almighty providence in all things. Its range is wide, its purposes are deep and far-seeing. Its particular manifestations are only parts of a vast and gracious plan. We cannot rightly estimate the present facts without knowing all their wide and unsearchable connections. What looks like hard adversity may after all be a very great mercy. All the heavy jars and hard severities and oppressive wrongs and wrenching pains and grievous experiences which come to hurt and disturb us are often but side-switches to remove us from the track of coming retributions, which would otherwise sweep us to destruction. It was so in the case of these sufferers to whom our apostle was writing, and it is oftener so than we know.

In our ignorance and narrow range it is impossible to penetrate the mind and thought of God in His dealings with us. What He does now we know not. We can only know that He reigns; that He is good and faithful and true to His promises and people; that not a hair can drop or a sparrow fall without His notice and permission; that His will is in all that happens; and that the time will come when we will thank Him for our sorrows as well as for our joys. His character and Word are our unfailing pledge that it is all right, and that the bitterness is after all only sweetness and mercy in disguise. The inward intention is not always readable from the color of the outward facts. We may often infer evil from what is meant for good. The sores of Lazarus and the leprosy of Gehazi may look like fruits of the same displeasure, but one was a curse for hypocrisy,

and the other was a trial of humility that helped on to Abraham's bosom. Stephen was stoned as well as Achan, but the one brought visions of heaven open to receive the dying martyr, while the other was the beginning of a hopeless perdition. And we do great injustice to our heavenly Father and great wrong to ourselves to think that God has forsaken us or that He is unfaithful to His dear children because we suffer.

As a martyr of the ancient times was led to the stake, he said, "I am God's wheat; therefore I must pass under the threshing, through the fan, between the millstones, and into the oven, that I may become bread for God." Suffering according to the will of God, he committed the keeping of his soul to Him in well-doing as unto a faithful Creator.

And this is what the apostle here directs. We cannot alter the allotments of Providence. If the day is cloudy or the night is dark, we cannot make them otherwise. "What must be, must." Our grumbling, worrying, battering, and complaining and cursing may unman and ruin us, but cannot change a jot of what God has ordered and appointed. Our only way is to be on terms with Him, to trust in Him, to submit ourselves patiently to Him, and to say, "It is the Lord; let Him do to me what seemeth Him good."

We never have anything to lose by keeping on in cheerful obedience to the Father in heaven, trusting in Him for the ultimate issue. Into whatever hardships or fiery trials our duty to Him may bring us, He will be with us in them. He will overrule them

to far greater good than we could have without them His grace will be sufficient for us while they last, and He will make ample compensation in the end.

In the case of these sorrowing exiles their cruel banishment was, after all, their gracious salvation from the horrors under which their country fell. Their burning griefs were their happiest deliverance. And so we may ever trust God that He means well by the troubles He sends. At the worst, He is at the helm and knows what He is doing. He has His manna and His water-springs for His people in every wilderness through which He leads them, and beyond is the land flowing with milk and honey. When the wicked are cast down they shall see it, and sing with gladness how much better it is to suffer and be saved than to hold place and dominion and be overwhelmed in the judgments of the Almighty. He may sweep away a man's estate, snatch away his friend, stain his reputation, cloud his day, and let his enemies triumph over him; but that is no reason for loss of confidence in His goodness or for voiding His service. If He wills that we should suffer, it is better that we suffer. He is as worthy of our faith and devotion in clouds and darkness as in prosperity and sunshine, and we should hold out the same in one as in the other, committing the keeping of our souls to Him in well-doing as unto a faithful Creator.

Check thy murmuring sorrows, thou lorn one, and know
That the chastened on earth are the purest for heaven;
And remember, though gloomy the present may be,
That the Master is coming, and coming to thee.

Epiphany.

Isa. 60 : 1–3 : Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.

THE full length, breadth, depth, and height of these words we are hardly yet in a position to comprehend. That they first and last apply to Jerusalem cannot be successfully disputed. That they include the coming of Christ, the institution of the Christian Church, its beginning at Jerusalem, and its glorious triumphs, has generally been accepted; and so they have been made the Epistle Lesson for the festival of the Epiphany, the showing of Christ to the Gentiles.

The prophet beholds the dark night of the great Captivity coming upon Israel. He sees his people shrouded in long and tedious gloom and sadness, ready to give up all hope. But, like Moses on Mount Nebo, he beholds glad visions beyond, a morning breaking, the chariots of deliverance hasting, the golden light of a new day ushering in. His heart is fired with the prospect, and with glowing soul he hastes to proclaim the glad news, and with trumpet voice calls upon his countrymen to arouse

from their lethargy, realize their calling, and be the Lord's people in very truth.

But the vision and enthusiasm of the prophet swept far beyond the restoration from Chaldean servitude. His language, though in Jewish dress, has a profoundly evangelic tone, and grasps revelations and manifestations of God's goodness to Israel and to the world stretching out to Gospel times, and even to the great consummation. In our day, as truly as when the prophet spoke, the words still apply, and constitute a prophetic word to us and to all people. I note from them—

I. The World is Darkness,
The Gospel is Light;
II. Nature is Sluggish,
Grace is Bright;
III. The Present is Cloudy,
But Glory's in Sight.

I. *The World is Darkness.* There was light at the beginning, but the depravities of men quenched it. True, God never left Himself without witnesses, but they were only as feeble tapers, faint and few, amid a universe of gloom. On all the face of the earth there was but one people—numbering only a few millions at most, and they far sunk in the general apostasy—among whom any worship of the true God existed. They were a mere drop in the sea of humanity, a little wax-light in the midst of a continent of darkness. Around them, to the farthest limits of the earth, including lauded Greece and

Rome, the whole world of man lay in heathenism and idolatry, feeling after God, but knowing Him not, worshipping and serving the creature rather than the ever-blessed Creator. Think of Egypt's adoration of bulls and rams and cats and bugs and birds and creeping things! Think of the Chaldean and Assyrian worship, linked with murderous and obscene devotions even more horrible! Think of Greece and Rome's renderings to heroes and emperors and spirits of dead men and a thousand fancied gods framed out of the myths of antiquity or the wild fancies of their own impure imaginations! Think of the shameless debaucheries, cruelties, obscenities, and revolting abominations practised all over the world under the name and belief of honoring the gods and winning the favors of Heaven!

And the attendant miseries accorded with such wretched divinities. The world was darkness. Men were the slaves of tyrants, and women were the slaves of men. Might was right, and helplessness and infirmity were spurned with disgust and abandoned to neglect and death. Misfortune and sorrow were without consolation, and suffering was aggravated by the required offerings to appease the supposed anger of the gods. No light of hope shone on the dying bed or into the all-devouring tomb. The future was a realm of shadows, doubt, and misgiving, into whose untried necessities the living were forced without one cheering ray to relieve the dark and dreaded transition. Wherever a conscience was found, it was troubled and agitated with a sense of guilt for which there was no remedy. Blood was

flowing in every land; altars were groaning with victims; hecatombs were smoking with gore; tortured and perishing pilgrims lined the highways; lacerating hooks and Moloch fires and wheels of idol cars and rivers glutted with infant corpses told the story of the myriads of lives sacrificed to the infernal gods who held sway over the benighted souls of men. Everywhere the cry of anguish and distress went up, without a word or ray of light to give the slightest consolation. No one knew wherefore he lived in this world, and all beyond was hopelessness and horror. And so it is even to this present hour where Christianity has not yet shed its redeeming light. Darkness covers the earth, and gross darkness the people.

But the prophet saw the rising of a new Sun on this night. He saw the breaking in of a blessed daylight. He saw Jerusalem illumined as it never before had been, and her light radiating among the nations, creating a new era for the human race. He saw the Gentiles coming to her light, and kings to the brightness of her rising. He knew of a Child to be born, even the Sun of Righteousness, who was to set all Galilee and Judea aglow with the glory of His teachings and His works, and send forth from His cross and His broken sepulchre, north, south, east, and west, a light of heavenly truth and salvation before which the idols should fall, the heathen temples fade, the gods of the nations tumble from their heavens, and life and hope and liberty once more pulsate in the arteries of man. The eternal Word, manifest in flesh, was to come into the dark prison-

house, saying, "*Let there be light.*" The true and only God, in His glorious majesty and true Father-heart, was to come again into the contemplation of mortals. In His Son Jesus Christ was to be revealed the reality of His infinite love and compassion for the benighted and lost children of men. A sacrifice for all the sins of all of them was foreseen, made once for all on Calvary, and proclaiming free, perfect, and everlasting forgiveness to every sinner willing to receive and believe the glorious tidings. The grace of God that bringeth salvation was to appear, teaching men to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, recalling them to trust and faith and hope in Jesus Christ, reconstructing society to the principle of love, breathing peace upon the sorrowing, the despairing, and the dying, and opening the kingdom of heaven to all believers. The trumpet of the Gospel was to sound, and its silver notes go echoing through all the earth, awaking a new genesis for this lost world. He who commanded the light to shine out of darkness was to shine into the hearts of mankind to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Not all who beheld that light would be willing to accept it. Then, as in all the ages since and to this day and hour, evil-doers were to hate the light and keep aloof from it, lest their deeds should be reproved. But no malignity of man was to be able to quench it. The world was to see it and find salvation. Brightening through the centuries and illumi-

nating all lands, it was to gladden the souls of millions on millions who should find in it their joy, their treasure, and their life. The world was darkness, but the Gospel was light.

II. In view of a day so glorious the word was, *Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.* By no efforts of man could there be light. Only God's glory is the world's light. And the revelation of that glory demands its corresponding duties on our part. In the darkness with which Egypt was smitten the people sat still. It was useless for them to attempt to rise. And in the thick mist of man's depravity no one is capable of any availing spiritual action. Adam fell, and with him all his children. With the darkness that covered the earth there was helpless prostration. Mankind were down, and of themselves they could never rise. Their moral night brought with it a spiritual sleep and a spiritual death, from which there could be no rising up until that night was broken. But light having come, it pertains to them to awake from sleep, cast off the works of darkness, and arise from the dead, that they may become light in the Lord.

Nature is sluggish. Even when the light is come and the sharp voice is sounding, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead!" the plea is, "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep." And even when there is some stir of returning consciousness, the ease-loving heart of man is slow to lift itself out of its bed or to arise to the duties of day. Israel heard the prophet's voice,

but did not care to set itself to the prophet's bidding. There was acknowledgment of his word, and some gladness for it, but there was no effective separation from the darkness and sleep of its indifference, nor giving up of the ill ways of the heathen.

The crash of judgment came; the temple fell, and Israel went sorrowing to Babylon. Their light failed them, because they loved darkness rather than light. And when it was renewed in the coming of God's incarnate Son, they failed in a more aggravated degree. They beheld the light, but they did not choose to avail themselves of it. The darkness and death of their traditions they would not leave off to follow Him whom God had sent to redeem them. Pleased to deceive themselves with imaginary glories, and doting on their carnal dreams, they let their blessed opportunities go by, hugged their delusions to their souls, and blinded themselves with their sensuous obstinacy to a still greater and intenser sorrow. The light came, but they would not receive it or profit by it; and for eighteen long centuries has it now been judicially hid from their eyes.

And so it has been with thousands of every age, and so it is still. Light has come. It streams in plenteous fulness everywhere. People see it, and hear the prophetic call to Arise and shine; but they prefer their carnal repose, put their own flickering tapers in its place, content themselves with their own sufficiency, and remain the curse-bound children of the night. Some, like the faithless son in the parable, say, We go, sir, we go; but they go not. The light comes to them, but they fight it from them, and

waste the day as if it were night. Ah, yes, *nature is sluggish.* These hearts of ours are hard to awake and slow to move.

But *grace is bright.* Coming first as an external light in the Word by the power of the Holy Ghost, it makes its way into the soul. It informs, it convinces, it awakens. And where it is honestly entertained it quickens, it stirs to action, it animates with new ideas and new life; it starts man from his spiritual prostration; it renews him in the spirit of his mind; it makes him a new creature, so that he who was some time darkness becomes light in the Lord. Yes, *grace is bright;* and unless it serves to quicken and transfigure these dull, dark natures of ours, so as to make us luminous in truth and godliness, it fails of its end and we fail of its profit.

The light of the Gospel is "the glory of the Lord." It is the light of truth respecting His nature, His goodness, and His merciful will and promises. Taking it into our hearts and understandings, adjusting our being and activity to it, and walking in it, He means that we shall be light-bearers, radiant and luminous ourselves and shining so as to enlighten others with the same glory. We are not only to *Arise*, but also to *shine.*

By the darkness of nature we are indisposed to profit by the light or to walk as children of the light. Even after the Holy Ghost has made us sensible of the truth, and moved us in some degree to embrace and obey it, darkness is apt to cling to us. To the Church, to Israel itself, the word still is, *Arise, shine.* Every Christian still needs to see to it to become

more and more luminous in knowledge, virtue, faith, and zeal. John was a burning and a shining light, and to obtain a like distinction needs to be each one's aim. Grace is bright, and where it takes effect there should be no darkness at all. Taking it in, the contemplation is that we also take on its brightness. We must not only believe, but also confess and testify. We must not only drink in God's light, but also give it forth for the illumination of others. To be Christians indeed, it must be seen and known that we have been with Jesus. Christ is intended to live in us, with His virtues repeated in ourselves. We are not only to receive the testimony of the grace of God, but to become living records and epistles of it, seen and read of all men. To illuminate a city each house must be illuminated, and the inmates must see to it that no darkness is tolerated in it. And so it must be if the Church is to arise and shine.

Ye heads of families are to see that the light of God shines in your homes; that your altar-fires of devotion go not out; that the light of your recognition and service of God be not extinguished. If those fires have never been kindled, light them at once; and if they have been suffered to die down, stir them up afresh and see that the altar-flame be kept alive and bright.

Ye who have been baptized in Jesus' name and laid your vows upon His altar in confirmation are to see to it that the light that is in you be not darkness. If you have left your first love, return to it; kindle it afresh; light your souls with the torch of the burning word and Spirit of your Lord and Sa-

viour, and let it be seen that you have not turned your backs upon the Light of life.

Where and in what occupations do your Sundays find you? They are meant to be to you days of brightening and illumination in all sacred thoughts and improvements. These are the days in which the voices of prophets and apostles sound, and the divine Word blazes forth its radiancy, and the heart-songs of Jehovah's people pour out before His feet, and the gracious light of salvation flashes in its highest glory, and the children of light rejoice in His light. And how can you be children of light and yet forsake the assembling of yourselves together where the light is?

It is the plan of God to make men the dispensers of His saving light to one another. He has ordained a ministry, but it is still one soul carrying and imparting the light to other souls. But this ministry is not confined to those specially called and appointed to the office. It pertains to every Christian to be a lamp and light-dispensing orb. Parents are called to a large share in this office. Young men and young women in the Sunday-school partake in the same commission. Every man, woman, and child in the Church is called and charged to let his or her light so shine that others seeing their good works may be led to glorify God. And when we see what darkness there is upon the earth, and what multitudes at home and abroad are yet in the darkness of sin, error, unbelief, and idolatry, what a call is there upon us who have the light to exert ourselves to the utmost if that by any means we may save some! We

would like to excuse ourselves. Nature is sluggish. But if we would be Christians indeed, we must *shine*, for it is the office of grace to make us bright.

III. *The Present is Cloudy.* So it was when Isaiah wrote. A great and increasing apostasy was upon Israel. God's word had largely faded from the hearts of the people. The vision of the Lord's chosen had become dim and their hold on His truth grown lax. A great and sore judgment impended. Nor is it much different with Christendom now. The Church is not half itself. The great doctrines of faith and salvation in the cross of Christ which gave it being many no longer believe. Infidelity has been creeping into the Church, into the pulpits, into our systems of education, into the very heart of society. Multitudes do not know any more what they believe, and are not anxious to know what they should believe; and multitudes more make a merit of not believing anything. To many the old Gospel is worn out. Heroism for the cross has died away. There are faith and brightness and earnest zeal in some, but the most are so empty in all the elements of a living faith that any trifle of this perishing world can command them more than the mighty things of God and eternity. Society is sick, and rotting down in its luxuriousness, its inertia, its self-pampering indulgence, its deadness to everything sacred and divine; and the Church shares in the decay. A consumption of wordly conformity has disabled its energies and is eating away its life. A new baptism from heaven must come upon it or it will die. Fortunes are gathered with untiring avidity, hoarded with miserly

devotion, and then left to be squandered by the idle, the dissolute, the unprincipled, and the lewd, whilst the cause of God gets almost nothing of them. The myriads are perishing all around us, the destitute of the means of grace are appealing for our kindly aid for themselves and their children, and the arms of the heathen in their darkness are stretched out in entreaty for the Word and light of salvation; and yet people who claim to be Christ's disciples, and have covenanted all they have and are to His service, fold their arms in unconcern, make themselves easy in their lethargy, and see not that God has anything for them to do except to enjoy themselves, eat, drink, and grow fat. I say, the present is cloudy. The Church itself is in mist and darkness.

But we are not left to despondency and despair. God lives, and His cause must live. Israel must suffer for its heathenisms and its apostasy. Babylon may be made strong to oppress and desolate the chosen people who prove faithless to their privileges and their calling. A long and songless night may come upon Jerusalem for its departure from its God. But the true prophet sees light beyond. The promises still stand. The holy seed shall not be utterly exterminated. The fires of punishment and the rod of correction will serve to purge away the dross from many. The eye of faith anticipates a brighter day. The unfaithful shall reap the fruits of their unfaithfulness, and they that turn aside to crooked ways shall be led forth with the workers of iniquity; but peace shall yet be upon Israel. Light shall come, though not to those who would not walk in it. The

glory of the Lord shall arise to the everlasting comfort of the repentant and the faithful, though not to those who turn away their eyes. In the midst of the years God will revive His work and remember mercy, though with no thanks nor consolations to the unwilling and the disobedient. Even upon the children of the faithless shall His glory be seen, but to all the greater shame of their unworthy fathers. The trophies of grace shall be gathered up from the heathen world. Zion shall be lifted from her ashes. The Gentiles shall come to her light, and kings to the brightness of her rising, though her proud and self-sufficient sons be given to the sword and desolation.

Yes, dear friends, the present is cloudy, but *glory is in sight.* It was the glory of the Lord, and the rising thereof at His first coming, that lay in the range of the prophet's vision. A still greater glory of the Lord at His second coming doubtless also was in the remoter distance. The one was to give the Gospel of the kingdom, the other that kingdom itself. The first, even amid the dimness of that long past, stirred the soul of the prophet and inspired him with a radiancy of zeal to arouse his people and kindle them to hope and duty as the chosen of the Lord.

And there was ample reason that the glad prospect should serve to this end. Their lethargy and indifference to their calling was without excuse before such an outlook. But now that what was prophecy then has become fact; now that the Son of God has come, the glory of the Lord arisen, the

day of light and salvation grown to blessed reality; now that the still more stupendous Epiphany of the King in His beauty impends in readiness to be accomplished,—what shall be said of those who know it all, whose eyes see what so inflamed the hearts of holy prophets in every age, and who may at any moment behold the Son of man seated upon the throne of His glory, and yet doze on in their dull unconcern, caring for none of these things? If Israel was to arise and shine with holy zeal and devotion at the prophetic anticipation of our day, how many times more inexcusable are we who continue in carnal sleep and spiritual idleness amid the full blaze of Gospel light and privilege! A day of glorious opportunity has come to us, and how stupid that we should spend it in dull inaction, turmoiling in the dust, working in the clay like Egyptian captives, when we might be forming eternal fellowship with heaven and winning titles to everlasting crowns! Light has come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon us; and why should we cling like bats to the dark crevices of earth and sleep away the day, when we might be soaring as eagles in the celestial sunshine, and be on our way to starry glories in the kingdom of the Father? Thousands on thousands of our fellow-Gentiles in all lands are being quickened and cured by the same light that we possess, and are pressing on to the New Jerusalem, and why should we not be among them and abreast with them? What are all the gains and comforts of this vain and perishing world compared with the glory that is presently to be revealed? The brightest stars

fade out before the rising sun, and the brightest things this world can furnish must shrink to nothingness before the splendors of that destiny which awaits the earnest, active, and devoted people of God; and why should we suffer these trinkets of time to turn us from the sublime treasures of eternity? Having been thus lighted to the very margin of the glories to come, is it not high time for us all to awake out of sleep—to arise and shine in a holy consecration of all we have and are, that we may shine for ever in the coming kingdom? Why should we be waiting for miracles and signs and wonders to bring us to our duty, when the greatest miracle of the ages is blazing its glorious light all around us? With the whole choir of prophets exulting over our opportunities, and a great cloud of witnesses joyfully attesting the presence of a day of grace and thrilling over the nearing day of endless glory, and Jesus, the great Captain of salvation, going before us with shouts, to follow Him to share the everlasting triumph, why should we hesitate for a moment, or consent to nestle and burrow in the filth and darkness of unsanctity and the curse? The great prophetic message to us is, O sleepy souls, awake, arise, shine; for your light is come.

First Sunday after Epiphany.

ROM. 12: 1–5: I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.

For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:

So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

REAT and wonderful are the mercies of God. Everything utters and proclaims them. To turn the folios that record them would be to turn every leaf in the vast book of Nature, the endless book of Providence, and the still more marvellous book of Redemption. We read them in the heavens and on the earth—on the years, the seasons, the months, the weeks, the days, the hours, the minutes. They glow in our natures, in our biographies, in our homes, in our aspirations, in our hopes. The daylight shines with them and the night is full of them. They clothe the hills and the valleys, they glitter in the waters, they pulsate in

the sea, they sparkle in the stars, they breathe in the atmosphere, they compass us about on every side. All the dispensations are their waymarks; they roll in the current of the ages; and all beings proclaim them. Ask of the angels who looked on when the world was made; ask of the morning stars which sang together when it rolled forth from the Creator's hand; ask of the sons of God who shouted for joy as it went wheeling on its course amid the circuits of the sky; ask of the men who first walked its virgin soil; ask of the prophets who looked deepest into the things of Deity and sung the profoundest of His works and ways,—what of all things is the brightest, broadest, and sublimest object that ever engaged their contemplations. And from all the joyous answer comes, THE MERCIES OF GOD—THE MERCIES OF GOD!

Why is it that any sinner lives unconsumed for his wickedness? Why is it that we are here to-day to hear of good and blessing? Why were we not cut down for the many wrongs, defects, and outgoings of ill-affection which have stained our lives? Why has not the earth yawned under us to swallow us up, or the lightnings leaped forth in wrath upon our ingratitude and rebellion toward the Father of lights? Why do the tidings of a born Saviour and the messages of divine amnesty and proffered salvation still come to us as they have been coming so long and so often? Why may we still cherish hopes of forgiveness and look out into eternity in expectation of its blessedness? Why do the agencies of immortality throng around our unworthy lives to

woo and win and help us from the ways of death, and put us on our feet to walk the paths that lead to Paradise? Why do redemption's powers press for admission to our souls and pour their warming and purifying light upon our dark, cold, and stony hearts? Why has there come to us a living Saviour, Son of God and Son of man, to undertake our forlorn cause, to take our sins upon Himself, to cancel our condemnation by His blood, and to open the kingdom of heaven to all believers? How is it that we, the frail and guilty children of men, should be called to sonship in the family of God, to heirship with the Only-begotten of the Father, to wear the crowns of immortal regency with the King of kings and the Lord of lords? Is not this Mercy's work?

Move out a little into these awful depths. Try to count the sum of all these benefactions. Apply the measuring-line for the dimensions of this amazing grace and goodness. And when the best has been done that created mind can do, beyond all reach of computation, beyond all boundaries of comprehension, and vast as the great universe itself, is the length and breadth and depth and height of THE MERCIES OF GOD.

And to this boundlessness of the divine goodness and compassion the apostle here refers us as the foundation of God's claim upon us, and by the same beseeches us not to be lacking in meeting them. Let us inquire, then, what it is that he proposes in the case, looking to the Holy Ghost to conduct us into a right knowledge of the truth and of our duty in the premises.

I. THERE IS AN OFFERING TO BE MADE.

As there were offerings under the law, so there are offerings under the Gospel. Both are called *sacrifices*, but they are not in all respects the same. The legal sacrifices were mostly slain animals. Though brought alive, they had to be slaughtered and placed upon the altar to be consumed. It is not so under our dispensation. The slaying of the Lamb of God as the propitiation for our sins has for ever swept away all dead victims from Jehovah's altar. The sacrifice of Christ, offered once for all, has fulfilled the law's requirements and "perfected for ever them that are sanctified." Through the merit of His satisfaction we now have "liberty to enter into the holiest, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh." It only remains for us now to "draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." As otherwise expressed in this Epistle (chap. 6 : 13), the great matter now is to yield ourselves to God. And this is what the apostle here describes as the "living sacrifice" which he would have us present.

But there is a sort of death going along with our Christian offering also. As there was slaying to complete the ancient sacrifices, there is likewise a kind of slaying here. It does not consist in the destruction of our being, but it does embrace a sort of slaying of the animal in us—the mortification of what is carnal and contrary to God—the putting of our bodily desires, lusts, and pleasures out of exist-

ence so far as in conflict with a state of holy consecration. Hence we read of being "crucified with Christ," of "being made conformable to His death," of being "buried with Him in Baptism." The death involved is death to the ill use of our bodily life—the cutting off and extinction of life in sin.

Nor are we to force away the mind from the emphasis which the apostle lays upon the presentation of our *bodies*, as though he really meant our souls. The sacrifices of the law were the bodies of animals, and the evangelic sacrifice consists of the bodies of men—ourselves in the activities and functions of our corporeal life. A man may think and plead that his heart is right; that his will is good; that after the inward man he reverences and honors God, while his bodily members are all serving the will of the flesh. Hence the emphasis is upon the presentation of our *bodies*.

There is something of a distinction drawn between ourselves and our bodies. *We* are to make the offering, and so the soul is necessarily concerned; but the thing which we are to offer is *the body*. The proper *we* is to be occupied in making the offering; but the particular sacrifice is *the body*, slain as to the carnal life, but alive to all righteousness. We are to glorify God in our *bodies* as well as in our spirits, and it is the bringing of the body to sanctification that involves the greatest conflict and the greatest sacrifice. Hence our offering is to be the presentation of our bodies a living sacrifice unto God. As when Aaron and his sons were set apart as God's priests, we are to be consecrated from ears to thumbs

and toes. The ear is to be consecrated, that it may be open to hear the divine Word; the hand, that it may never be stretched forth to iniquity, but ever work and do for the great Maker's praise; the foot, that it may walk the ways of the Lord and run with patience the race that is set before us; the lips, that they may speak and sing of God, and for God, and to God; the eyes, that they may be turned away from beholding vanity and look unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith; and every other member, that the whole body, rescued from all other service, may be offered a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God.

And this the apostle claims to be our "reasonable service." It is a rational thing, and by far more so than any ritualism. "Nothing can be more consistent with reason than that the work of God should glorify its Author;" nor can any offering be more dignified and blessed than that our entire corporeal life should glow with sanctity and holiness.

Nor are we our own. We have been bought with a price. At mighty costs the mercies of God have found a ransom for us and a full extrication from the clutches of the law. For such a benefaction we owe everything that we can render. Redeemed, re-begotten, and quickened to spiritual life, it is pre-eminently reasonable that our bodies should be a living eucharistic offering, consecrated for ever to Him who has bought us with His blood. And because this is reasonable, and at the same time pleasing and acceptable to God, the apostle beseeches us by the mercies that have redeemed us to make it the first

great duty and aim of life to bring our bodies in living consecration as our offering unto God.

II. There is to be a Line of Demarcation drawn between Us and the World.

The consecration just described necessarily involves this. Over against the reigning paganism of the apostle's times, pure Christian discipleship was as day to night. They could not coalesce or coexist. Holding with the one was severance from the other. It was the characteristic of the world that it walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries. Christians could have no fellowship with such things. Hence a line of difference had to come between them and the world. And it soon became evident enough. The heathen themselves noticed it, and made it a subject of reproach upon Christians as being unsocial, heartless, and uncivil. Peter says they thought it strange that believers did not run with them to the same excess of riot.

This line of difference may not be as distinct and glaring now as then. The world has learned to accept some things from the Church, and modern professors have learned to concede so much to the world that it is often hard to tell which is which. Once the line of demarcation forced itself on every eye; now, most professing Christians have to tell it by words, or it would not be known whether they are Christians or not. But this does not alter the fact that the true children of God must maintain a line of distinction between them and the world.

Much as the world may have changed, and under whatever reforms and refinements it may now present itself, it is still the same corrupt and wicked world it has ever been. The humanized and civilized disguises which cover and gloss its depravities have added to its hypocrisies, but have not altered its essential anti-Christianism. The old carnal mind still rules in it. The Devil is its god. And so it will ever be this side of the day of judgment. If fornication, idolatry, adultery, effeminacy, self-abuse, thieving, covetousness, drunkenness, reviling, extortion, lying, blasphemy, and a pervading ungodliness characterized it in the apostle's time, who can show that it is different to-day? Not all who belong to it are alike chargeable with these offensive things, but we have only to lift the cover from what is proudly called genteel society to see how hollow and rotten a thing it is. It is as full of Mammon-worship, greed, pleasure-seeking, defaultings, tricks of trade, dishonesties, untruthfulness, contempt of religion, defiance of law, lecheries, uncleannesses, murders, suicides, divorces, and devilish hatreds and malignities as it is of conceit and self-consequence. Its codes, its maxims, its fashions, and its reigning spirit are as far removed from God, righteousness, and the honest simplicities of virtuous life as in the days of St. Paul. Genuine Christianity as necessarily withdraws a man from it now as then. The word still holds: "*Be not conformed to this world.*" Hence it is demanded of every one who would become a Christian, "*Do you renounce the devil and all his works, the vanities of the world, and the sinful desires of the flesh?*" Though *in* the world,

we are not to be *of* it. We must come out of it and be separate from what pertains to its ways. The goodishness with which its devotees salve and flatter themselves will never answer for a life of faith in Jesus and unreserved obedience to His institutes. Its rules and maxims rest on a worldly wisdom, and fall far short of the wisdom that cometh from above. Its ways and fashions, its amusements and enjoyments, savor so entirely of the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, and the pride of life that piety languishes under them. Its moral code is too elastic and easy to fulfil the stern requirements of God. And in all these respects a line of demarcation is to be drawn between us and it.

Just where this line in every given case is to come cannot be formulated in absolute and universal rules. To affect singularity is not the thing, for there may be as much pride and self-righteousness in ostentatious austerity as in fashionable folly. All depends upon correct inward principle. And hence the apostle adds that we must be "*transformed by the renewing of our minds.*"

Christianity is a spiritual power. When the soul opens to it, the Holy Ghost resets and new-creates the spirit of the man, so that he looks away from earth to heaven, and from the things of this world to the things of God and immortality. Another bent is given to his feelings and his aims. He walks in the light of a new sun. He feels the presence of a new law drawing him in a different direction from that of his old carnal life. His being is radically metamorphosed, so that he sees with other

eyes, estimates things by another rule of judgment, and is moved by other principles. And as he yields to this new graft upon his nature he instinctively realizes what is contrary to it, and what the good and acceptable will of God is. He does not need outward rules; it is plainly told him from within. He feels it. It evidences itself to him from the whole spirit of his mind. And as he consults and follows this new principle of life he will see and know what to condemn and avoid in the world's ways, and turn away from them. The force of a new spiritual gravitation determines for him what is the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God as over against conformity to this world. The written Word is at hand to direct in most instances, and in questions of doubt the honest consultation of his own moral sense will leave him in no darkness as to the right. The life of faith in the soul, the love of God shed abroad in the heart, the inner seeking of the man to his Redeemer as the magnet of his being, will tell him where the line is to be drawn between him and the world.—But this is still not all.

III. There is an Obtrusive Self-consequence to be yoked down to Humble and Cheerful Service.

All Christians have not the same endowments and offices. There are "diversities of gifts and differences of administrations." The measure of faith is not alike in all. Some have special adaptations in one direction, others in another. Not all are prepared to be apostles, or prophets, or teachers, or

administrators of government. The make-up of the Church is like the make-up of the human frame. "As we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." Christ is the Head, and to that Head believers are joined as so many different parts of one organic whole. A man cannot be all ears, all eyes, all nose, all hands, all feet, or all of any other particular member. Neither can these several members dispense with one another. All are equally required to make up one complete man. "The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor the head to the feet, I have no need of you" (1 Cor. chap. 12). And for each member to fill its true place and office, and to keep truly and faithfully to the functions for which it is fitted and designed, is of the greatest practical importance to the general good.

And just here it is that disabling friction is liable to come in. Though we be established in grace, it is one of Satan's tricks to stir us up to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. There is such a thing as hypocritical affectation of humility, and also such a thing as inordinate love of pre-eminence. Some are so proudly meek that they are ever depreciating themselves, and others are so meekly proud that they are very sorry for those who do not highly appreciate them; but the faulty root is the same in both classes. Satan has been at work stirring them up to think more highly of themselves than they ought to think.

The superiority of some is so high in their own esteem that they can have no sort of respect for those who are not just like themselves, and everything is going to ruin that does not go their way. The hand is discontented that it is not a mouth, and the ear is surly because it is not an eye, and the foot is stubborn because it is not a head, and the arm is condemnatory because the leg bends in the opposite direction from itself; and so contention, unpleasantness, disability, and schism are the result, damaging the Church, hindering the cause, and ruining souls.

Now, if we would indeed present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, and rightly draw the line of demarcation between us and the world, we must necessarily learn this art also, not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think, but to think soberly, according as God has dealt to every man the measure of faith, that each may serve God and his fellow-Christians with humbleness of mind and cheerful dutifulness in such places and relations as Providence may assign. No member of the Church is unnecessary. The weak and feeble have their worth as well as the gifted and prominent. Those who may be tempted to think themselves overlooked and neglected still have their worthy functions in the body, whether noticed or unnoticed. And, on the other hand, no member of the Church is necessary. God can carry on His work without any one of us. To prove this to us, He often cuts down those whom we would regard as indispensable pillars, and yet the edifice stands and the work goes on. We may think and wonder how

we would miss this one and that one if some accident were to happen to their lives. But it is a needless anxiety. While here and in place, we all have our important functions in serving one another and the common cause, but the world's salvation or the Church's life does not hang on us. Pretensions are easy, but they are not therefore promotive of God's glory or much to our credit. They offer a commodious place for the activity of the carnal mind. And if we would truly fill the apostle's directions, we must be on special guard against an obtrusive self-consequence. Humble and cheerful service in our spheres and places is the true Christian spirit.

And for all this the great thing is to find our true place before God. We need often to bring ourselves under the all-seeing eye of Jesus. Keeping our souls as in His presence, and in constant communings with His mercies, sobers our thinking, keeps down our pride, and disposes the Christian heart to willing service in any sphere.

Thus, then, dear friends, by the beneficence that made us, by the love that redeemed us, and by all the countless mercies of God that ever throng around us, let us present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service, separate ourselves from the ungodliness that is in this world, and in lowliness of mind serve the Church and our fellow-servants according to the measure of grace given us by Him who loveth us and gave Himself for us.

Second Sunday after Epiphany.

Rom. 12 : 6–16: Having then gifts, differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;

Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching;

Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity: he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.

Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.

Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another;

Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;

Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.

Bless them which persecute you; bless, and curse not.

Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate.

A GREAT German preacher has remarked that there is one word at present the theme of every conversation and the subject of daily thought in nearly all circles. We read it in every newspaper, see traces of it in every house, meet it on the streets, and encounter it everywhere. It knocks with bony fingers at our doors, and stretches out its shrunken hand before us at

every turn. In the council-chambers and senate-halls of government, as well as in the assemblies and private circles of the people, the same word sounds, and forces itself upon attention. That one word is WANT,—the pressure and need of our times. If any one could rise and point out the means to relieve and satisfy the discontented, hungering, oppressed, and perishing millions that are filling the world with their wailings, clamors, and outcries, he would be the most welcome preacher on earth. The people would throng to him in streaming thousands; emperors, kings, congresses, and legislators would load him with decorations and honors; and the world would thrill with glories to his name.

The truth is that *society is sick*—sick in head and heart, in chest and limbs, from centre to circumference. It has many doctors of varied schools, equally positive and confident in their prescriptions and promises, but the patient is not helped and the bad symptoms only intensify as the years roll on. Some say, Leave for other climates; start afresh in some untrodden wilds; seek the golden hills of countries yet unoccupied; lay out for yourselves a new paradise in the lands of the rising or setting sun. Others say, No; stand to your places, your homes, your rights. There must be some free bloodletting to cure these cramping ills. Revolution, radical and unsparing, must be arranged and carried through. The sword must be turned on the powers that be; kings must be dethroned; fortunes must be levelled; the world's goods and honors must be equally divided; and death to all who stand in the way!

Others say, No, none of this: let reason have the sway; cut the mind loose from its enslaving traditions; starve out your priestcraft and your bother about an unknown God; get away from the worn-out nests of the old faith; let your threadbare Gospel and your cowardly fears of judgment be hurled to oblivion. Let science dictate and reason reign, and all will soon be well! Others say, No, no; we must have stronger government; what society needs is the old iron of Roman administration to strengthen it; we must have stern laws, sternly enforced, to break down and subdue the stubborn and rebellious and cast out the evil; traitors must be punished, treason must be made odious, timid and lenient rule must give place, righteous authority must exist somewhere, and everything that hinders must be put down by the arm of power! And so the discussion or the quarrel goes on, increasing every day; and society meanwhile drifts, amid many a jolt and crash and sorrow, no man knows whither. We look, and wonder with the ancient Jeremiah, "Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why, then, is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?" "We looked for peace, but no good came; and for a time of health, and behold trouble!" And for the world at large there is no hope for the better. There is a Physician here, but it will not come to Him. There is healing balm at hand for all the wounds and ailments of man, but the masses will not accept and use it. There is provision for all the ills of these perturbed and pressing times. There is a remedy to mollify and diminish

all evils, and eventually to remove them altogether; but the world, as such, will not receive and take it. And in so far the case is hopeless.

But whilst the general mass of men thus lumber on from bad to worse till the great day of judgment breaks in to make an end, individuals here and there, like Noah and Lot, though feeling the general adversity, may still find secure deliverance and shelter if they but attend to the Word which comes to us from God. The remedy is before us. It is a great, free, and universal remedy. By order and commission of the sublime World-healer Himself it is preached and offered to every one. The dear-bought Gospel of Jesus is that remedy. And a good part of the prescription is written in this day's Epistle, which sums up into these three particulars:

I. In Faith, Faithfulness;
II. In Love, Brotherliness;
III. In Trouble, Trustfulness.

Let us consider them devoutly and apply them earnestly, and the Lord help us in so doing!

I. In Faith, Faithfulness.

"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith," is the admonition of the same inspired apostle who wrote the text. If we be not in the faith, nothing else can effectually help us. "He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." "He that believeth not is condemned already;" and from

that condemnation there is no recovery so long as one "hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God." "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." The spring of all peace and salvation to man is in Christ, and it is the office of faith to accept and appropriate Him as our divine and only Helper. The vital question, therefore, is, "*Dost thou believe on the Son of God?*" And, until that is affirmatively settled, wrath and misery must continue and increase, no matter what we may do or cherish.

But having come to faith, and to place in the congregation of them that believe, the next great thing is to be faithful in it. Christians have gifts differing according to the grace given them, and hence differences of spheres, offices, relationships, and duties, public and private, social and individual. When Christ ascended to the Father, "He gave some apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." Mankind cannot be set right or brought into happy and saving fellowship with Heaven without a knowledge of the divine Will and Word. People must know this, or they never can come to healing and salvation. The truth of God must be made known, preached, expounded, and sounded in men's ears and understandings. To this end there is a shining of the Spirit to illuminate, qualify, and move certain ones to speak, teach, and show the divine Will and Word. To some was given plenary inspiration, to act as God's mouthpieces to their fellow-men, to make known

and record His everlasting truth and purposes; others received the same illumination in less degree; and all believers, in their measure, share it.

The office of teaching and speaking for God, and the carrying of the Word of life from Him to the souls of men, is a divine and abiding appointment to which the Holy Ghost never ceases to call some. The same degree of miraculous power and direct sacred illumination may not be realized now as at the beginning, for the same necessity does not exist, since we have the full records of the prophets and apostles; but the same office continues. It pleases God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe. And in proportion to the necessity for the sounding of the Word is the importance of fidelity in those called to preach and administer it. The trumpet must be sounded, and must not give an uncertain sound. Not all are apostles; not all are prophets; not all are teachers; not all are workers of miracles; not all have the gifts of healing, of speaking with tongues, of being interpreters; but of them to whom such gifts and offices of holy stewardship in the Church are given the first and primordial requirement is that they be found faithful.

Prophesying and preaching are to be "according to the proportion of faith." Not human science and philosophy—not the vagaries of one's own imagination—not the impulses of a conceited egotism mistaken for the Holy Ghost,—but the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth as it is in Jesus, is what is to be held, preached, taught, declared, applied, and insisted on. The Word must be heard

from God's mouth, and truly uttered, that those who hear may know what the will of the Lord is, and on what they may depend. Alas for the uncertainties, the untruths, the half-truths, the mingled and cloudy testimonies often put forth in the name of God in these latter days! The office continues, but how few truly fulfil its functions! The great need of the world at this hour is a regenerated and reformed ministry—a ministry that upholds and teaches the truth of God as prophets and apostles taught it—a ministry that preaches out of the heart of living faith according to the faith possessed, and not out of the mere learning of the schools, the polish of rhetoricians, the conventionalisms of a profession fashioned to the pleasure and itchings of a depraved human fancy. The faith must first of all be in those who propose to bring others to faith; and according to the measure of that faith they are to prophesy, falling below it in nothing, going beyond it in nothing, and giving themselves wholly and unceasingly to these things.

And when the prophets prophesy according to the faith living in them, and ministers and servants of the Church wait on their ministering, the teachers on teaching, the exhorters on exhortation, and the almsgivers give with simple heart and single aim, and the various states in the Church stand to their several duties and callings, and the Gospel is thus fully expressed in letter and spirit, in life and deed,—there is that faithfulness in faith which is the first great demand for the healing of an ailing world.

A second requirement is,

II. In Love, Brotherliness.

"God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?" (John 4 : 16, 20). True faith in the soul brings into a community of believers and necessarily begets a fellowship of faith. The Church of Christ is a family of which He is the Head, and all His people brethren and sisters one of another. Alienations, schisms, and harsh and angry severances there, in which one looks upon another with haughty disdain, antipathy, hatred, or envious malignity, are not only breaches of the divine order, a libel on the Christian profession, and a sore disability to the retention of faith, but the instrument of the intensest aggravation to the ills which it is the office of the Gospel to mollify and cure. Hence the word is, Let there be genuine and undissembled love. Be kindly-affectioned one to another with brotherly love.

There is nothing on earth which so embitters life and turns it upside down as selfishness. This is the sin of sins, and the root of all sins. Man was meant to be a fountain ever flowing with blessing, and gladdest in the stream of good that it gives forth; but selfishness transforms him into a vortex, ever drawing in, coveting everything and enjoying nothing. The true principle of all wholesome being and the whole essence of the divine law is *love*—right love to one's self, love to one's neighbor as to one's self, and love to God supreme over all other love.

And where genuine love to God is, there will be love to all that God loves. We cannot love God and yet refuse to acknowledge and treat as our brethren those whom He has accepted as His sons.

Christian love is not so much a passion as a principle. It is not simply the going out of the heart toward those whom we particularly fancy, but a spirit of kindness, affection, brotherliness, and sympathy for all who are Christ's, no matter whether specially lovable or not. The heathen and the worst of men are ready to show favors to such as they happen to like. But Christian love is a far higher, deeper, and broader thing—a thing of pure and genuine principle, not of mere fleshly or æsthetic impulse—a thing which has regard to others, not for their special loveliness, but because they are God's children, for whom Christ died, and who for Christ's sake have been accepted and received into the family of grace. They may not be what would otherwise interest or enlist our affections; but because they believe in the same God and Saviour with ourselves, have been redeemed by the same price, stand in the same relations to our good Father in heaven, and have been called to share in the same salvation and heaven for which we hope, they have a right to a share in our regard. Not every member of our family may be just to our mind. Indeed, there may not be even one that at all meets our ideal. And yet they have our consideration. Not for their superior attractiveness, but, for the simple reason that they are connected with us in family bonds, we treat them with more favor than others. And the same

principle is to hold and govern in the family of our Lord Jesus Christ.

There are many weak and unlovely ones in whom we would otherwise feel no interest on their own account; but because they belong to the family of God's children they must be respected as such and embraced in the regard and sympathy which Christians owe to one another. We are not required to admire their faults, to take their defects for beauties, or to esteem their cranky coarseness as excellence and wisdom. Neither are we required to approve them when they go wrong or when they do dishonor to their profession. But in so far as they confess the true God and Saviour and are trying to be Christians, we cannot disown them or treat them as heathens and publicans. They belong to the same family and household with ourselves, and the spirit of common brotherhood must be exercised toward them, bearing with their defects and doing our share to help and profit them.

Nor is a mere pretended interest and love the thing demanded. Good words on the lips and friendliness in the manner, with envy, treachery, disdain, and secret hatred in the heart, is not Christianity, but deceit and devilishness. Grudge and dislike cherished in the soul cannot be varnished into right affection by external civilities. Love must be without dissimulation, or it is only sugared malignity—a white shroud on a putrid corpse. The Gospel calls for reality, sincerity, truth, and honest cheerfulness. A love that is all word and show, or that is founded on calculations of self-advantage, is

not Christian brotherliness. A heart that cannot forgive a trespass, or pass by an affront, or overcome a feeling of resentment, or honestly do good and kindness to those who have failed to do the right thing to us, is not a heart in which grace reigns and Jesus dwells. The word is, "Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not."

And where love is, there must also be the deeds of love. There are always some who are miserable, helpless, or in distress and trouble of one sort or another, whom it is in our power to comfort and benefit. Not every lazy, idle, thriftless, drunken profligate is to be encouraged. Vice has its penalties, and it is not our business to favor it by seeking to lift off those penalties which God has attached to it. People only offer rewards for mendicancy and crime when they indiscriminately bestow their benefactions upon all who come pleading poverty and want. We need to know first what sort of characters they are. Our mercy is to be exercised, but not so as to cover up our abhorrence of that which is evil.

I do not say that the vicious poor are to have no kind consideration, but to support and uphold them in their viciousness is to make ourselves partakers in their wickedness. They may be brother-men, but they are not brother-Christians, and have no sort of claim upon our attentions like the poor and suffering of God's household. We are to do good unto all men as we have opportunity, but especially to them that are of the household of faith. There is a brotherhood of Christianity which has the first and highest claims above the brotherhood of mere hu-

manity, and the one must not be sunk in the other. Christians are to care for Christians as they do not care for those who despise our profession and dishonor our Lord. The kind affection, the brotherly love, the friendly sympathy, the beneficent distribution, the ready hospitality, of which the apostle speaks are what Christians owe to one another as they do not owe to the godless, the unbelieving, the vicious, and the profane. Others may become believers if we treat them rightly, and they are of the same common flesh and blood with ourselves, and therefore are not to be wholly cast out of our regard; but we mistake and misapply the precepts of the text if we suppose that the good and the bad are equally in contemplation and equally to be considered. Virtue, faith, and honest Christian devotion are the things which the people of God are specially called to favor and sustain; and to treat vice or ungodliness as if it were one and the same with these is the running of Christian charity into a sort of free love, subversive of all proper Christian brotherhood, and the very reverse of what the world most needs.

It is an oft-misquoted maxim, and one under which many a mean and miserly selfishness has taken refuge, but in its place soundly true, that *Charity begins at home.* When Christ is in men they have claims upon us which the Devil's children have not. Christian affection has its first exercise in love of the brotherhood; and in proportion as this fails its Christian character fails—just as no man can be a genuine patriot and yet love and labor for other lands rather than his own. John was pre-eminently

the apostle of love, and yet he has given the solemn admonition, "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house; neither bid him God-speed; for he that biddeth him God-speed is partaker of his evil deeds" (John 2: 10, 11).

The faith is of far more importance than an indiscriminate good-will, for the world needs a divine Saviour more than it needs our benefactions. True charity can never ignore God's only saving truth. Salvation comes by faith, not by charity. But where true faith is, charity must come as a necessary fruit of it. And where true charity is, there will be a tender heart, a ready hand, for such needy and sorrowing ones as love and serve that same Saviour in whom we trust. Let mankind thus come under the reign of love in Christ Jesus and to that brotherliness in faith and love which the text inculcates, and there will come great power for good: the ills and ailments which so vex and disturb the world will be reduced and melt away like snow before the summer's sun.

But there is yet one other item in the prescription:

III. In Trouble, Trustfulness.

In this world it is not possible to escape trials and tribulations. Brotherly sympathy and affection can do something to lighten sorrows and to comfort us amid our griefs and hard necessities, but they cannot go far toward effectually healing them. The only true Consoler is in heaven. Nor is there anything that can so lift, strengthen, and steady us amid the

vicissitudes and sorrows of this present life as a living trust and confidence in Him. If we truly believe that God reigns, that His good and almighty hand is in all that comes to pass to overrule it for His people's good, that the tender sympathy of Jesus is with us in all that we may be called to suffer, and that He will not only enable us to weather through all earthly pains and griefs, but will surely recompense our faith and patience under them with eternal consolations and rewards,—the seeming paradox of our apostle's directions disappears, and we can see how, in the worst, we may still "*rejoice in hope.*"

Let the times be never so ill; let adversities lie ever so hard upon thee; though anxieties should rise with thee every morning, and sore distress accompany thy lying down every evening,—looking up to Him who has covenanted never to leave nor forsake thee, but to uphold and sustain thee to life everlasting, thou still hast springs of consolation which no earthly troubles can ever dry up. There still remaineth light in the darkness, hope against despair, and resources of mental peace to give joy in sorrow and patience in all thy tribulation. To murmur and rebel, to complain and blame, to rave and curse, when things go ill, can do nothing to soften trouble or to turn away its waves. Confidence in God, the casting of all care upon Him, close-clinging to His good promises, and meek submission to whatsoever He sees best to send or permit, is the great remedy, the only effective antidote.

Here we may learn a lesson from the little bird. Though the winter sheet be on the ground, covering

from him all food; though the winds be bleak and cold; though starved and hungry and not knowing where his next day's meal shall be found; though the dark, long, and blustering night be settling down upon him,—he meekly flies to his perch, gathers his feathers over his feet, puts his head under his wing, sleeps gently through the darkness and the storms, and awakes in the morning with a song in his mouth. He does not know God as we do, but still he trusts in Him. And the great Jehovah does not forget him, nor suffer him to fall, and in due time feeds and blesses him. How much more, then, shall He take care of His dear children whom He has purchased with His blood, anointed to be His kings and priests in the coming ages, and covenanted to keep and bless for ever! And if the little birds who know Him not can thus meekly trust Him in their hard straits, why may not we who call Him our Father, and know that Jesus loves us more than He loved His own life?

Nay, more: whatever our extremity in this world may be, the throne of grace still remains accessible. To that we may come in every time of need and obtain mercy and every required grace to help. Whatever else may fail us, nothing can cut off our communications with the bountiful Source of all supplies. From any depths of earthly distress or calamity the doors of heaven stand open to us, to draw from them what will sustain us here or to go and be for ever at rest there. Nor is there anything to ease off the hard necessities of this world like obedience in being "instant in prayer."

The natural pride of man is hurt when it goes ill with him. He is slow to be reconciled to adversity. And his resorts are apt to be anything but those to which the apostle directs. Instead of making him lean the harder on God, he is apt to become the more dissatisfied with God—to blame a Providence which does no better for him—to question even whether there is any good and merciful God at all—to rave and fret himself like a wild beast in a net. Envy and cursing of others are apt to find place in his heart, and this one and that is held responsible for his misfortunes, abused for his ill-luck, loaded with criminations for his losses, calamities, and sufferings. Men have deceived and disappointed him. Rascals have cheated him. The friends he once trusted have betrayed him. Those whom he served and promoted have turned against him. Unworthy men are preferred before him. He has labored hard and faithfully, yet receives no consideration for it. And his heart is full of sullen anger, resentment, melancholy, and unbelief in the trustworthiness of God or man. But all this can only make matters worse. The bear that savagely grasps the running saw because it nipped him is only cut asunder for his anger. Rather be patient; put hands to work to get away from the place of danger; pray, trust, and hope in God that things may turn out for the better. Let not heart fail, nor exertion cease, nor confidence die. Be not slothful in business; be fervent in spirit; be dutiful to God; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; exercising a humble and condescending spirit; and,

whatever may be the present trouble, it will all turn out at last to thine everlasting advantage and glory.

The cactus which studs the plains of Mexico is an ungainly and offensive plant. Its leaves are long and thick and stiff and hard and full of thorns and prickles. It is clumsy and ugly and hateful to look at, and a wounding and piercing thing to strike against or fall upon. To rush upon it to get it out of the way is the sorest folly. Better patiently and daintily seek the small avenues to get around it in the softest manner possible. And if it is thus leniently and gently treated, it will do us no harm; and when it comes to its culmination there is not a blossom in all the kingdom of beauty to equal its exquisiteness of form and tint and grandeur of luscious bloom. And so with the ugly providences that come in the way of earthly life. To rave at them and fight them is to wound ourselves the more. But if we gently and softly make the best of them, leaving all to God in humble faith and duty, what we were disposed to rail at as a curse and impediment will yield its glorious flowers to gladden all our eternity.

E'en the best must own,
Patience and resignation are the pillars
Of human peace on earth.

Third Sunday after Epiphany.

ROM. 12 : 16–21 : Be not wise in your own conceits.

Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.

If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath : for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink : for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

THESE words connect directly with the Epistle Lesson of last Sunday. They are a part of the same prescription for the healing and comfort of an ailing and suffering world. They have been designated as the Christian school of peace, in which we all need to be pupils, learners, and graduates in order to realize the full virtue and blessedness of our holy Christianity. The several points of excellence in a true and successful learner in this school it will be my present aim to indicate and describe. And, taking the apostle's precepts for my guide, I find that such a pupil in the Christian school of peace is marked by these several characteristics. He is,

I. TOO WISE TO THINK HIMSELF WISE,

II. Too Just to Insist on Justice,
III. Too Honorable to Assert his Honor,
IV. Too Avenging to be Revengeful,
V. Too Bent on Conquest to Fight for Victory.

Paradoxical as these statements may seem, they all lie in the several admonitions of the text, and a little consideration will show their truth, their clearness, and their practical beauty.

I. Too Wise to Think himself Wise.

Not all that glitters is gold. Mankind are ever liable to be deceived and imposed on. The misjudgments and mistakes of people are endless. Even the wisest and most knowing, with all their carefulness and caution, cannot always escape them. The natural mind is so circumscribed and so full of darkness, the keenest perceptions of men are so dull, the passions of the human heart are so active in coloring things, and the greatest are so prone to rest on mere general impressions or on what others think and say, that it is not possible for any one in this world to be free from error or to maintain a perfectly correct knowledge and estimate even in what is best understood. It is human to err; and, as we are all human, we are all liable to err, and are erring continually.

Nor is there any department in which we are more likely to err, mistake, and misjudge than in our estimates of ourselves. To know one's self is a height of wisdom which few fully reach, and a department of knowledge in which there is endless

blundering and folly. Human nature is proud, ambitious, egotistic, and prone to intense self-flattery. It is a fact that the greatest fools in the world become such by reason of their overweening self-esteem. Half the offences and miseries in human society take their root in people's thinking of themselves more highly than they ought to think. They thus become obtrusive, overbearing, self-asserting, sensitive, and resentful, begetting all sorts of discomfort and violence to peace and good fellowship. Hence the word is: "*Be not wise in your own conceits.*" When people think themselves wise, and act on such assumptions, they take the highway to all sorts of ill-success and damaging collisions. The world, indeed, needs positive men and people who will stand to the truth with courage and resolve; but it is never wise to be too self-confident, and hence intolerant of what may happen to be against our views of things. Most questions have more sides than one, and few can be perfectly sure that they see all sides with equal clearness and impartiality. And when people have once settled it in their minds that they are saints and philosophers, and that their thinking and ideas compass the whole truth, making dissent impertinence and perverseness, the train is laid for every sort of mischief.

A wise man will not implicitly trust himself. He is awake to the fact that he who trusteth to his own heart is a fool. Therefore he is reserved and guarded with his conclusions. He considers how weak and prone to be misled human nature is, how treacherous the heart is, and how easily a man may be made the

victim of his own delusions, and hence he restrains himself, gives his judgments with caution, tries himself well before he acts, and is careful not to allow his own conceits to command and control him without holding himself open to instruction and better light. And even when clearest he is still modest, deferential, and ready to accept correction of an error, though from an humble source or even from an enemy. This helps to keep the peace, to promote good-will, and to open the way for truth where a pharisaic spirit causes disgust, hatred, and contempt. A certain minister has left on record that his life was a failure until he found out that God did not make him a great man.

To affect obscurity or submission is base and suspicious. Mock-modesty is a meanness, and argues a dastard soul. Genuine humility is not abjectness, but an inwrought prudence not to overvalue self or to think we know everything and others nothing. The more a man knows, the surer he is how little he knows; and modest self-distrust and openness to better instruction always mark the children of wisdom. Such a man conciliates while he improves, and effects the most while he professes the least. His meekness and humility smooth his way. And he is a true son of peace, being too wise to think himself wise.

II. Too Just to Insist on Justice.

As the natural heart reasons, every one is to be paid in his own coin. As others render to us, so are we disposed to render to them. If they are

good and gracious to us, we are more or less ready to reciprocate the favors we receive; and if they are hard, stern, exacting, and uncivil to us, nature's impulse is to render the same in return. An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth is the code which men are most ready to recognize and enforce. Many think it even-handed justice to measure to people with their own bushel—to meet their ill-speaking of us with a raking-up of all the ill we have ever known of them—to confront slight and incivility with slight and incivility—railing with railing—cursing with cursing—wrong with wrong. Nor can any one reckon up the sum of mischiefs and sorrows springing from the miserable rule of doing unto others as they do, or we fancy they do, unto us. The Christian school of peace has a very different rule of social justice. The command here is, "*Recompense to no man evil for evil.*" Two wrongs can never make a right, but they can easily make a breach which nothing can heal and the ultimate sorrows of which are beyond computation. There is a higher righteousness and a more needful justice than that of rendering evil for evil. If people treat us wrongfully, it is a great infraction of God's law; and if we treat them the same in return, we make ourselves guilty of the same sin and become the agents of still worse evils. The golden rule is to do unto others *as we would have them do unto us.* If they fail in this, it is then their responsibility, not ours, and we only share their guilt and increase the trouble by returning the wrong.

It was Cotton Mather who said that he did not

know of any person in the world who had done him an ill office but he had done him a good one for it. It is hard to bring our crabbed natures to such forbearance under the stings and provocations of wilful injury; but it can be done, and God's law calls for it. The learned Bishop Wall used to say, "I would suffer a thousand wrongs, rather than do one; I would suffer a hundred, rather than return one; and I would endure many, rather than complain of one or obtain my right by contending." It may seem like justice to make the one who has injured us suffer for it, but there is a higher and more ennobling justice which is careful to "recompense to no man evil for evil." The peace and order of the world and our duty to God require this of us; and so the son of peace is too just to insist on justice.

III. Too Honorable to Assert his Honor.

It is no mark of greatness to be always standing on one's dignity. Accepted as God's children, we might reasonably disdain civility to the sons of Belial. But that would not be for good and peace in the world, nor serve to recommend us or our cause. Hence the apostle's precept and example to "give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God," even as he sought to please all men in all things, not seeking his own profit, but the profit of many, that they might be saved (1 Cor. 10:32, 33); or, as it is given in the text, "*Provide things honest in the sight of all men.*"

Things *honest* (καλος) are things goodly, beautiful, fair to look upon, pleasing, excellent, honorable,

worthy, noble. And having a care to make such a showing means carefulness in conduct and bearing, so as to disarm prejudice, do away with just cause of reproach, and commend ourselves to the approval of candid men. In many instances this involves concessions and condescensions, undeserved and seemingly regardless of one's own rights and dignity. Ill minds made it a charge against Christ that He was willing to receive sinners and to eat with them. It seemed to be a letting down of His claims and honor as a great and holy prophet, a compromise of His credit. But it was a worthy, good, and beautiful illustration of the spirit of His Gospel and of the way to win the attention and sympathies of those whom He came to bless and save. He did not stand on His honor, nor care for the preservation of it in the esteem of the captious and unreasonable. He did what was right and beautiful and good in these merciful and gracious condescensions, and He was too honorable and true to the needs of men to refuse friendly sympathy with the outcast and the despised, or to hold Himself too pure and holy to associate with them in tenderness and civility. He came to save them. His office was to win their confidence, that He might comfort them with His goodness and lead them to a better life. And as it was with Christ, so it is with all who rightly profit in the school of Christ. As the children of God they have a standing which lifts into glorious dignity; but it lies in the nature of their superior honor and calling to try to conciliate and win by a tenderness and beauty of behavior toward others. When souls in

sin and error are to be brought into the paths of life and salvation—when the ignorant are to be taught, the vicious reclaimed, the lost recovered, and those who know not God brought to faith and hope—saints are too deeply imbued with the sublime honor of their calling to make it a reason for not caring whether they please or displease. Let it be a humbling condescension for sons of God to seek to win the commendation of the sinful and depraved; a true son of peace is too honorable to stand upon his honor. Rather, does he become all things to all men, if that by any means he may save some.

IV. Too Avenging to be Revengeful.

As much as in us lies, we are to live peaceably with all men. It is not possible, indeed, to please everybody. Offences must needs come. Some natures are so crooked, crabbed, and perverse that it is out of the question to be true and yet keep on good terms with them. There are people who would fall out with an angel from heaven if they could not mould him to their own will and purposes. And when the hearts of such are once unfavorably set, one might as well try to turn a river over the mountain-top as to bring them to amity and good-will. Though they claim to be Christians, nothing can subdue their ill-affection and bad temper. They will sting and stab and cut and fight whenever and wherever they have an opportunity. Sorrows will not melt them, and the presence of death and judgment has no effect to modify them. Such unreasonable men were found in the apostle's time, and they

have not died out. Yet, as much as in *us* lies, we are to try to live in peace even with these.

And if people will not be at peace with us, wrong us, insult us, and injure us, there is also a Christian way of avenging ourselves. It is not such as men naturally would adopt, nor yet what the text calls *avenging*, but still a way of dealing toward enemies which is a sort of peaceable avengement. It has nothing in it of a revengeful passion, but it has everything in it to give us satisfaction. In the world's way of rendering evil for evil we are not to avenge ourselves; but the true son of peace still has his recourse and consolation.

There is a just Judge in heaven who takes account of all, and will render to every one according to his deeds. From that tribunal there shall come indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, "unto them that are contentious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness." Ill-minded people will not go free because we refrain from resenting their affronts. There is One who saith, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And the first item in a true Christian avenging of his injuries is the devout thought that a just God reigns, and hence the restraint of self to give room for His judicial wrath. There is no fear that the Almighty will not handle all our enemies according to their offences. He knows the particulars, He has noted the parties in the wrong, and He can mete out full justice to them better than we. If we suffer innocently, He will avenge us; and in His hands we can afford to leave the matter, sure that due recompense will fall

where it is merited. It is said of Jesus that 'when He was reviled He reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously" (1 Pet. 2 : 23). And with the same peaceful submission and endurance we can take the wrongs men do to us, leaving all to that eternal Arbiter from whom nothing is hid and no evil-doer can escape. This is the way of peace, and a mighty element of satisfaction when we are unjustly treated.

It is also a satisfaction to be able to render good for evil. Hence the word is, "*If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.*" There is nothing that so defeats and disables enmity or spite as to pass it by without notice, to make no answer to it, to let it hang on the hands of its authors. Mere patient silence on our part will often cause it to die from weariness of effort which has no effect. And to render good offices for its evil ones tends to turn malignity into anger with itself, and to create shame and self-reproach, which often ends in repentance and restitution. These are the fiery coals which burn in upon the wrong-doer and make him feel the miseries of his enmity and devilishness, and betimes serve to melt him into quite another temper. To an ill-minded man revenge is sweet, but it is a far sweeter satisfaction to see an enemy transformed into a friend. The emperor Sigismund was once reproached for showing favors to his enemies, but his answer was, "Are not my enemies destroyed when I make them my friends?" And the most effectual

means of working such a happy change is not severity and retaliation, but the return of good for evil.

When Alexander was asked how he attached everybody so warmly to his interests, he said: "I treat my enemies so well that they cannot help becoming my friends, and my friends with such constancy of regard that their devotion never wavers." Nor is there anything more noble and blessed than to treat our enemies in a way that melts and changes them to friends. And even if our forbearance fails to bring them to a proper mind, it will not fail to make them less happy and assured in their ill-feeling, while it helps to soothe and charm away the sting and poison of insult and injury. This, then, is the proper Christian avengement, in which the son of peace is quite too deeply immersed to permit him to take the law into his own hands or to seek satisfaction in revengeful retaliation.

V. Too Bent on Conquest to Fight for Victory.

The greatest enemy with which a Christian has to contend is the perverseness and evil passion of his own heart. The devil has infused his malignity into our nature, and it there lives and works with a power and persistence which a lifetime can hardly overcome, and which is not completely eradicated as long as we are in these corrupt bodies. Though the soul be regenerate, it is still in contact with evil disposition, and has a perpetual war on hand to keep ill passion down. Nor is there any possibility of escaping from this perpetual conflict. Nay, our

great business in this world is to conquer the evil that is in us. The war is one of life or death. We must overcome evil or it will overcome us. And when a man sets himself to obey God and to live for Christ and heaven, he raises the flag of rebellion against the depravity that is in him and commences a siege of self-conquest which he dare never give over. Surrender is perdition. Self and evil passion must be vanquished and brought into captivity to the rule and Spirit of Christ, or we fail in our Christianity and lose our salvation. To give place to spite, resentment, retaliation, and revenge, and to persist in harming those who do us injury, is to give Satan the advantage, to let go the check which we are to keep upon our evil nature, and to give the field to the only enemy that can do us any real hurt. Therefore the admonition is, "*Be not overcome of evil.*" Resentful passion is a victory for the devil, and therefore it must be suppressed; for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

But if we be indeed the children of God, there is also good in us. The truth and Spirit of God are there to show us what is well-pleasing to Him, and to help and dispose us to follow it. There is an enthronement and love of Jesus there, and an impress of His likeness, prompting us to be forbearing, merciful, forgiving as He hath set us an example. There is a sealed covenant there, pledging an everlasting kingdom and reward for all we suffer. This is the good that has been vouchsafed to us in Christ Jesus. And by this good we are to overcome evil, to displace the brooding of our thoughts on the ills, un-

kindnesses, and sufferings of this present time, and vanquish all feelings of resentment. And as we value this victory over self, and strive for the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus, all fight for the trifling good of which the tongue of slander and the hand of malice may deprive us becomes a folly. The great victory to be looked after is the victory of grace and goodness in our own souls. Winning that, we can well afford to let all other conflicts drop. And on this victory the true son of peace is too earnestly bent to turn aside to war and strife with the miserable slaves of sin and passion who are pleased to act toward him the devil's part. His King is God. His duty is to imitate the example of Christ. His trust is in a righteous Providence which will not allow the meek to suffer beyond what will be to their good. His aspirations are set upon the great rewards in heaven. And under all the wrongs he feels on earth his motto is, *Bear—Forbear —Forgive.*

Such, dear friends, is the scholar and graduate in the Christian school of peace. Our world is a scene of perpetual strifes; and in this school we learn how a Christian is to go through it. Christ Himself has set us the copy. We may not be able to compose and possess our souls under injuries as He did, but we can try to imitate Him. Nor is there a better way to deal with the evil-minded and their ill doings. And with the grace of meekness, goodness, and genuine charity dominant in our souls, the victory is ours, no matter how much ill-will may seem to triumph.

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany.

ROM. 13:8–10: Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.

For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

TEXT like this bespeaks a discourse on debts. And a very important passage it is in its relation to Christian ethics and the welfare of men both in this world and the next. It speaks of some sorts of debt which the apostle admonishes us to vacate and avoid, and of another sort which we are always to feel and never to think finally discharged. The first respects Money Debts, and the second Debts of Love. My effort will therefore be to set forth the spirit and meaning of the apostle in both these instances. And may God bless His Word to all of us!

I. MONEY DEBTS.

1. Taking the words in their strictest sense, the apostle would seem to require that no Christian should ever go in debt, but always manage to pay

as he goes, so as to be in no one's books. It would doubtless also be better for us if this sort of cash dealing were more generally adopted and more firmly adhered to. The number of overgrown fortunes, as well as of disastrous failures, would then be very happily reduced and many a suffering avoided.

But we would perhaps be pressing the matter too far to consider the apostle as absolutely prohibiting the making of any debts whatever. In the present state of society the conveniences and possibilities of business would be materially disturbed and hindered to require every single transaction to be tied down to a uniform ready-money system. It is also difficult to see why we should insist on the technical stringency of a rule when the spirit of it can be otherwise quite as fully maintained. Even in matters of family expenditure, it may save trouble and render better satisfaction to buyer and seller to pay in larger sums at certain intervals rather than each day in detail. And many of the great transactions of commerce and trade would necessarily be much restricted and embarrassed without some sort of mutual credit as agreed by the parties. Hence I question whether the apostle meant his prohibition in the extreme sense which the words will bear.

2. The great vital point of the precept is that when a man owes a debt it is his bounden duty to God and society to pay it. If debts have been contracted they must not be left unsettled, and he who is in debt must toil, labor, deny himself, and do everything in his power to get out.

The apostle had just been speaking of the rights, powers, and offices of civil government, and the obligation of Christians to be submissive and obedient as citizens of the state. Civil government is not only useful, but indispensable. It is not only a human expedient for the regulation and preservation of society, but it is an ordinance of God. Hence we are to respect and obey it in all cases, except only when it transcends its sphere and commands us contrary to God's Word. And as it has divine warrant to punish revolt and crime, so it also has the right to exact tribute for its support. The first application of the text, accordingly, is to the honest payment of our legal taxes. As Christians we are to render tribute to whom tribute is due, and so discharge our debt to the government. Evasions of the tax-laws and dexterous tricks and concealments to the injury of the public revenues are not only punishable violations of good citizenship, but they are sins against God. They may escape detection on earth, but they are noted in heaven and forbidden and condemned in the divine Word. Christ paid tribute even to the pagan Cæsar when so poor that He wrought a miracle to bring up the money for the purpose.

From dues to the government the apostle refers to debts in general. When we have made purchases or entered into contract or promise to pay for any commodity, service, or convenience, the law of Christ is that we honestly and promptly fulfil our promises. If we buy, we are to pay for what we buy. If we have hired persons to serve in our employ, we must

pay them their stipulated wages. If we have borrowed from any one and put ourselves under obligations to others, we must pay back as agreed. And no man can continue a right Christian who does not pay his honest debts. Whatever else may be obscure or doubtful in the text, this certainly is not.

3. A particular broadside is accordingly given in this passage against those niggardly pests of human society who are sometimes met with in the shape of the mean and covetous rich. Some are so greedy to get all they can from everybody that they are satisfied to be in debt all over, and never pay any one if they can help it, or unless they can make by it. There be creatures on the earth who have much, but grudge to let a dollar pass out of their hands to satisfy an honest debt. They buy the closest and pay the worst, and oppress and grind every one with whom they have to do. If a penny is due them, they must have it on the spot, while *their* creditors must wait their slow convenience. They rack their tenants, extort whenever they can, drive away the ass of the fatherless and take the widow's ox for a pledge. They are worse than highway robbers, for they take and withhold, not from want, but from the insolence of power and plenty, in calm cruelty and cold-blooded villainy—yea, with the blandness often of pretended charity and friendship. Monsters and criminals that they are, there is no guarding against them. They cannot be brought to justice. To sue them brings down their resentful anger, and consequent loss of trade, and they so manage that the costs of forced collection exceed the gain. They

know their advantage, and they use it to oppress the helpless that they may add to their own ill-got fortunes.

Workmen, shopkeepers, and tradesmen are generally people of slender means, whose business and living depend on the prompt payment of what is due them and quick returns on their investments; and it is a great crime, as well as an inexpressible meanness, for men of ample fortunes to make them wait or to disable them in their livelihood by keeping them out of their money when it is due, compelling them to waste time and patience in trying to get it, and in the end getting it at a serious loss. If men are not paid for their work and goods, they cannot pay their own creditors, and embarrassments, bankruptcies, defalcations, domestic misery, and sorrowful ruin are the result, chargeable too often to the guilty meanness of people who *can* pay, but out of their devilish greed manage not to do it. Inhuman wretches! Demons in human shape! No words are too strong in condemnation of them.

> Of all God made upright,
> And in their nostrils breathed a living soul,
> Most fallen, most prone, most earthly, most debased,
> None bargain on so easy terms with death.

4. Most clearly also does the apostle here utter his inspired protest against all reckless running into debt. If we are to "owe no man anything," it lies in the whole nature of this precept as an undoubted moral requirement that every household, every man, is so to square expenditures to income and enter-

prises to means that they may at all times be within the limits of safety and honest sufficiency. All unreasonable risks and daring adventures, as well as all luxurious extravagances built on hope and kept up at the expense of other people, are here put under divine prohibition if we would at all maintain ourselves as Christians. All indefinite and inconsiderate borrowing, and the whole credit system in general, meet with but little allowance under this rule. It may be measurably unavoidable, and with due care and precaution may work no disadvantage, but it is faulty in principle and opens the door for all sorts of wrong and disaster. Lustful pride, vain ambition, the passion for riches, and the love of luxury and indulgence are very strong in poor depraved human nature. Many thoughtless mortals also labor under the hallucination that money in hand, though borrowed or owing to creditors, is still somehow their own which they may appropriate to their own gratification, pleasure, and adventures without wrong. Many who are doing business solely on other people's capital are yet foolhardy enough to live more handsomely and indulge themselves more extravagantly than would be warranted if it were all their own. Many are so devoted to their fantastic tastes and appetites, so governed by their covetous pride and vanity, so given to gayety and wantonness, play and pleasure, wine and women, that they are willing to become debtors to any who will trust them, not caring who suffers, only so that they have wherewith to feed their vices. Many are above making use of the limbs God has given them

to earn an honest livelihood or save expense, and so have not wherewith to pay their debts, and hence are tempted by artifice, lying, fraud, or some wicked device to get possession of other people's money. Many will even take the money they owe to the dealer who has supplied them with the necessaries of life, to the tailor who has furnished the clothes they wear, to good and decent men who have been kind enough to try to help them on in the world, and throw it away on horses and harlots or to pay what they call "debts of honor" to gamesters and sharpers and cunning miscreants of whose acquaintance they should be ashamed. But all such doings the apostle here condemns as of the Devil, to which no man dare give himself and yet hope for the favor of God.

It is bad enough when, through misfortunes and unforeseen contingencies, an honest man is unable to pay his debts. In such cases the unfortunate ones deserve our sympathy and commiseration, and charity dictates the stay of harsh and distressing exactions upon them. But when people in reckless extravagance and with open eyes plunge themselves in debt, live beyond their means, and waste on their follies and vices what they know to be due to their creditors, the thing becomes a crying crime, for which they deserve to suffer in this world and will be sure to suffer in the world to come. Even if the law provides a way for insolvents to swear out a bar to further legal exactions upon them, that does not release the debtor from the moral obligation that is upon his soul. The giving up of what is left at the

last comes too late to cancel the criminality of having lived beyond our means and wasted in wild speculations, extravagances, and vanity what should have been husbanded to pay our debts.

5. And yet another important thing involved in this precept to "owe no man anything" is the practice of honest industry and economy, that we may have the means of keeping out of debt. If people do not have ample fortunes left them by inheritance, there is no other way of securing an honest livelihood but by personal exertion in some labor or business by which to earn and accumulate for themselves. They must become bread-winners. They must find something to do, and set themselves diligently to do it, by which to gain returns to meet their necessities without becoming a burden to others, or it is not possible for them to keep out of debt, or to get out when they once get in. The poor and the unskilled may have trouble to make ends meet, and hence they must practise rigid and careful economy as well as unremitting industry. Idleness, intemperance, needless expenditure, or whatever comes in to bring on poverty and want, so that to live is to go into debt, are therefore as much forbidden by this precept as anything else, and do not at all comport with Christian character.

Nor should any one be ashamed of honest labor It is noble and Christian to work, to be diligent in business, and for every one to abide in that calling wherein he is called, working with his own hands that he may eat his own bread and have to give to charity and to God. And any course of life which

is contrary to this is unchristian and has upon it the curse and condemnation of Heaven.

It may thus be seen what is the range of the apostle's precept with respect to Money Debts. Nor can it be too earnestly taken to heart, or too carefully practised. But there is another kind of debt which we must not overlook. We notice, then,

II. Debts of Love.

1. It seems a little paradoxical that the same sentence which condemns thoughtless plunging into debt should at the same time admonish us never to think of getting out of debt. But the difference in the kinds relieves the seeming contradiction. We are to owe no man money debts, but we are to feel it as an everlasting obligation upon us to exercise love toward our fellow-men. Money debts are things of our own making, the putting of ourselves under bonds which we are morally bound in honor and honesty to discharge; but love debts are those under which our Creator has placed us, and which inhere in our very position in the universe. Under the one kind we cannot come except by our own agreement and consent; under the other kind we ever are, by having been created members of one another as fellow-creatures in the same general community. From the one it is our duty to keep ourselves as free and independent as possible; from the other we are never to wish ourselves free, but always to hold ourselves firmly bound by them. And yet the keeping of ourselves out of the one kind, and the practical keeping of ourselves under the other,

both rest on the same foundation of moral obligation to God and immutable righteousness.

2. It may seem a little singular that the apostle should speak of love to our fellow-men as a *debt*, and place the duty under which we lie to love one another, and the duty to pay up on our purchases and contracts, in one and the same category. In common thinking and feeling we would never suppose ourselves guilty of the same injustice to a fellow-man by not loving him as by withholding payment for value received. We feel that we have a right to what people have contracted and promised to pay us, and for which we have rendered an equivalent, and that if they do not pay us we may justly use force of law to collect what is due; but we have no such feeling of right to demand their love. We would never think of prosecuting a man to seize upon his heart and affections in the same way that we might justly seize upon his goods for the satisfaction of a debt. To attempt such a thing bears absurdity on its face, and would be as ridiculous as wrong. It thus becomes remarkable that the apostle should speak of money-owing and love-owing in precisely the same terms and as having the same binding obligation.

The explanation in part is this, that money debts fall directly within the sphere of human law and government and the external regulations of society, while debts of love do not, and hence cannot be enforced by constraint. It is in spiritual principle that these two kinds of indebtedness meet upon the same ground and come to have the same element of debt.

It is also worthy of note that the words *ought* and *owe* have a common origin and signification, and are very closely related. But it is chiefly the *ought*, the purely moral obligation, in which to love our neighbor and to pay what we owe come into the same list. They are not equally debts on which one man can demand and exact from another, or in which payment can be enforced by the power of human government; but they are equally debts in that sense in which we all stand morally bound before God. Nay, the right Christian observance of the apostle's precept in both instances is essentially the same thing—namely, the exercise of that love to our neighbor which we all are obligated to God to bestow.

But there is also a further idea in the case. There is an element of reciprocity—of consideration on the one side begetting indebtedness on the other—which underlies the obligation of a man to pay for what he buys. All can readily see and appreciate this in the case of money debts. Nor is it wanting in the make-up of the debt of charity and affection which we ever owe to one another. We would all like to have the good-will and affection of the people with whom we have to do. We prefer that they should respect and love us rather than hate and detest us. But what right have we to count on their charitable regard if we are not willing and ready to do unto them what we would have them do unto us? The whole thing becomes one-sided, selfish, and unequitable for us to expect love from others if we are not willing to render what we ask; so that love to

our neighbor partakes also of the nature of a debt to him on the basis that we expect and count on the same from him. He may, in fact, fail to render back the same to us, but that does not vacate our obligation to him, for the reason that we have no right to expect from him what we do not first render to him. It is not at all a matter of mutual bargaining between us. The obligation to God is the same on both sides, whether both equally meet the obligation or not; but still, there is an underlying reciprocity of consideration which renders it a thing owing on our part, that whatsoever things we would that men should do to us we must in equity do to them. This is our debt to them, which holds and remains upon us whether they pay a like debt to us or not; for if they do not answer to our goodness, we are still not at liberty to copy their badness.

3. But what is the nature and practical operation of that love which each owes to his fellow-man? What is the real meaning of the commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself"? The apostle here and the Saviour elsewhere tell us that it means the fulfilment of all the several precepts contained in the Second Table of the Law. It is also further described as that condition of mind, feeling, or principle of life which works no ill to one's neighbor, but is considerate of his good and welfare, as well as of our own. It is that temper and behavior toward a fellow-being which will not debauch, kill, harm, maim, or injure him; which will not steal or covet his goods; which will not defraud him or deceive him by falsification and lies; which

will not injure him in his reputation, standing, and good name by slanderous speeches, misrepresentations, and the bearing of false witness concerning him; and which is ever ready and willing to discharge toward him all the demands of right and brotherliness. And when all this is cheerfully and willingly done, and persevered in continually, then may we be said to love him as ourselves.

4. There are two kinds of affection called love, between which it is important to discriminate. The one is the approval and affection which we feel for one who pleases us and exhibits a character and qualities which are to our mind; the other is simply a sincere good-will. The one is complacency, the having of pleasure in those whom it contemplates; the other is simply benevolence, which wishes well to all who are capable of happiness, and is willing to do what it can to that end. Take God Himself as the example. He truly loves the whole world, but He is not therefore pleased with everybody. He is pleased only with the believing and dutiful, and is angry with the wicked every day. In like manner, we cannot be pleased with everybody, and our good-will is not to be confounded with approbation and complacency. There are beings and characters whom we can in no sense approve and take pleasure in, and whom it would be very wrong for us to love in that sense or in any sense, except to wish that they were better and to do what we consistently can to make them better. We cannot be pleased with devils or wish to reverse God's condemnation of them, as that would be against righteousness and

the general good of the universe. Neither can we approve and commend wicked men, or seek to screen them from the just consequences of their crimes. We may love them so as to be sorry for them, and pray for them, and wish them a better lot, while consenting with the law which imprisons and executes them. He who would favor a thief, set a murderer free, and turn a malicious incendiary loose upon the community, so far from exercising a genuine benevolence, makes himself partaker of the guilt and proves himself an enemy and an injurer rather than a lover of his kind. Not every one is good and lovable, and hence we cannot love all with the love of complacency. We dare not for a moment think of making common cause with the wicked, or we take sides against God and goodness to the detriment of the community in general, and even to the damage of bad men themselves. But we can love every one in the sense that God loves them, wishing well to the sinner while condemning his sins, and doing what is in our power consistently with truth, justice, and the general good for his recovery to righteousness, and so to a happier condition of life and destiny.

5. But this loving of our neighbor which is the fulfilling of all the precepts of the law needs to come in some freer and fuller way than mere obedience to prescriptive requirements. It needs to come as the spontaneous impulse of the soul which can only be realized where the love of God is shed abroad in the heart. It is only as we are pervaded with an inner harmony and communion with the

Fountain of all love and goodness that we come rightly to love what God loves and to have His spirit of love living in us. We cannot put it on from without; it must be kindled from within, and is only truly kindled when the whole being is moved and aglow with the love wherewith He has loved us and done for us. A legal spirit may in some sort meet precêptive obligations. Conscience may impel and constrain to that. But it is not thé bright and bounding spirit of genuine love. "The ready flow of devotedness in love can only come from a heart which God has filled with Himself." There may be a human tenderness which breaks forth on occasion in very generous feelings and services, but it is not the love which fulfils the whole law. It may be very noble and good as far as it goes, but it falls far short of that deep, earnest, spiritual, abiding, and universally radiating impulse of which the apostle here speaks. This love comes from the heart full of Christ, rather than from the melting contemplation of particular cases of suffering and misfortune. Human kindness to the distressed is one thing, but it is not necessarily that pervading principle which is the pure charity of the Gospel. When the heart is full of Christ, who fulfilled all righteousness, and is softened, moved, and melted by His redeeming love, then only the flow of graciousness and love in us becomes that deep and ever-swelling stream of goodwill and service which fills up the measure of scriptural charity, with no regret but in the thought of the feebleness of the affection in one who is so infinitely beloved. Nor is it in any other way than by

a profound realization of the example of God, by the soul's entrance into the spirit of the divine law, and by the sweet and sanctifying influence and happiness of a grateful consecration to God in the accomplishment of His will and purposes, that we can come to the full exercise of that temper and affection which, in its own principle, sums up and fulfils all that the law requires and all that the prophets teach. We must learn to love God aright before we can love man aright; and it is only right love to God that begets and secures a right love to man also, and holds it in living power while life and being last.

> The wine of love can be obtained of none
> Save Him who trod the winepress all alone.

So much, then, for this discourse of the apostle on Debts.

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany.

COL. 3: 12–17: Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

HEN any one becomes a Christian he enters upon a new life—he becomes a new man. Old things pass away, and all things become new.

The apostle has just been describing this change—the working off of the old man and the bringing forth of the new man, renewed in righteousness and true holiness. Those who have experienced and entered upon this change he calls "the elect of God, holy and beloved"—the chosen ones of the Lord, set apart unto sanctification, and dear to the apostle as seals to the regenerating power of the Gospel and fellow-citizens in the commonwealth of the redeemed.

And thus recognizing the new man as risen in them, he here proceeds to direct them further respecting sundry points of great practical importance.

I. How to Clothe and Adorn;
II. How to Nurture and Sustain;
III. How to Direct, the New Man.

To these particulars, therefore, I invite your attention; and may the Holy Spirit help us to consider them to our profit!

I. How to Clothe and Adorn the New Man.

It is always commendable to be tidy and careful in our dress. A slattern or a sloven is always disgusting and offensive. All nations and societies of mankind, as they improve in knowledge, culture, and civilization, invariably give more attention to becoming appearance when they go forth from their privacy into the presence and company of their fellow-men, and count it rudeness not to do so. The apostle seems to recognize this as very proper, and proposes it for our spiritual imitation as we advance in the superior life, knowledge, and sanctification of our election in Christ Jesus. As new men, coming into a new style of being, we need to be attired accordingly. We must have regard to the sort of presentation we make of ourselves, so as not to be found naked or so ill-clad as to be a scandal to others and a dishonor to our profession. We must be so arrayed as to commend ourselves to every one's conscience, giving none offence to the Jews, to the Gen-

tiles, or to the Church of God. The only question is as to what constitutes the proper dress and adornment of a Christian. And on this point the apostle answers with great explicitness.

1. He would have us pay particular attention to our under-garments, respecting which people are apt to be most neglectful and indifferent. Hence his first direction: "*Put on therefore bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind.*" These are all very elegant articles of spiritual apparel and most royally adorn the new man. It was in the contemplation of just such things that the Psalmist said, "The king's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework" (Ps. 45 : 13, 14).

"*Bowels of mercies*" are named—a Hebraistic expression for tenderness of heart, commiseration for the afflicted and unfortunate, and sympathetic feelings in general. Joseph yearned over his brethren, and was so affected that he sought where to weep (Gen. 43 : 30). Paul was tenderly moved toward his Philippian brethren (Phil. 1 : 8). And this is the way it was described. Jesus had the same sort of feeling when He beheld the multitude, and had compassion upon them because they fainted and were scattered abroad as sheep without a shepherd (Matt. 9 : 36). A hard-hearted Christian is an abnormity. We are to be able to enter into the feelings, situation, and sorrows of others. We must be capable of pity, which not only speaks in the countenance and on the tongue, but goes down into the soul, touches our inner nature, and produces yearning and

uneasiness in the depths of our being, disposing us to rejoice with them that do rejoice and to weep with them that weep (Rom. 12 : 15). This is the inmost garment of the new man which he is always to wear.

Next comes "*kindness*"—a benevolent disposition, making us willing to help and relieve so far as in our power. As the new man is not an unfeeling, cold, and heartless man, so he is a benignant man, ready to open his hand and purse to comfort and assist those whom he commiserates and pities. Selfishness is spiritual nakedness, and compassion in the heart will always show itself in the gracious word and the helping hand.

But there must be "*humbleness of mind*" in the matter. For people to make a show and a merit of their charities, and to think themselves so much better than others because they give to the poor, feed the hungry, and visit the sick, is to soil and unmake the very goodness of which they boast. To admire and exalt ourselves for our pious affections and good deeds is to use the devil's looking-glass. It is the dead fly which corrupts the apothecary's ointment. Having done all, we are to count ourselves unprofitable servants, having done no more than our duty. We are nothing but helpless and wretched paupers and pensioners before God, and all that we have we have received from His merciful compassion; and it is nothing to be proud of, that one beggar should divide his piece of bread with his fellow-pauper. The moment we grow great and important in our own eyes we sink and depreciate

in the sight of God; and when we think ourselves most admirably arrayed we have nothing but a few gay feathers on the head of a body of stark nakedness. Humility even in evil deeds is not so bad and out of place as pride in good ones. Therefore we must "be clothed with humility," or all our other virtues are mere tinsel and chaff and our best array is only filthiness and rags.

These several articles we may call the under-garments of the new man, as they all respect the inner temper and disposition of the soul more than the outward dealing with others. But they still do not constitute his full attire.

2. The apostle therefore proceeds to note other garments, to be put on over and above the more inner clothing of the soul.

Foremost among these is "*meekness.*" St. Peter specially celebrates "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit," which he pronounces of "great price in the sight of God" (1 Pet. 3 : 4). "Meekness" is a patient and gentle bearing toward others in cases of vexation, chagrin, impertinence, and unsatisfactoriness. It is the opposite of a discontented, roiled, heady, turbulent, fretful, and refractory temper. There are some people who are always imagining their rights invaded, their dignity insulted, their honor impinged, their claims overlooked, their will unjustly set aside. They are censorious and contentious, always getting into controversies, always provoking debate, always dissatisfied, always embroiling the circles in which they move. What they lack is that adorning which shone so conspicuously

in the Master, who was meek and lowly in heart. They need a moderator to their too easily-ruffled passions—something to quell their discontent, acerbity, and rash excitement—something to soften their indignation when it is just and to restrain it when it is unjust—something to tone down their whole spirit in patient quiet when things do not go according to their mind—something to give amiableness to their behavior. And that something is *meekness*.

Along with this, and partaking in part of the same nature, a true child of God needs also to wear the habit of "*long-suffering*." A revengeful and retaliatory spirit is one of the vestments of the old man, not of the new. The heathen thought it a disgrace and a lack of all proper manliness not to resent an affront, but Christianity has taught us quite another lesson. To be rebellious under the divine appointments, and to be resentful under injuries, whether supposed or real, are alike contrary to Christ, "who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously" (1 Pet. 2 : 23). A Christian must learn to bear and forbear. He cannot have all his rights and dues in this world, and it is as useless as it is wrong for him to be in a perpetual worry and strife to secure them. He must wear the garment of long-suffering, leaving it to God to avenge his wrongs and right his cause.

Nay, more: even when he has just cause of complaint he is to be *forbearing* and *forgiving*, ready to pass by an offence. Holding every one to strict ac-

count will not make them better or him happier; and it is the same whether we seek to repel an injury by our own hands or by means of the civil magistrate. Better lose anything in this world than to make a wreck of our patience and lose our Christian character. Even as Christ forgives us, so are we to forgive those who trespass against us.

It is neither cowardly nor ignoble to bear injuries. The meanness is on the part of those who inflict them, not on the part of those who bear them. Aristotle himself could say, "To inflict an injury is a dishonesty, and therefore dishonorable and infamous; but to suffer one with equanimity is the result of virtue, and therefore glorious." And sure it is that if we forgive not men their trespasses, neither will our heavenly Father forgive us our trespasses. Vengeance is the Lord's, and He will repay; but it is ours, as Christian people, never to avenge ourselves, but always to be forbearing and forgiving as the Lord in whom we hope, and wear the noble habit of looking with pity rather than with resentful wrath upon those who do us wrong.

And having put on all these adornments of the new man, we still need the proper girdle to hold them all in place and to finish out the entire array. There must be a band and tie to complete the outfit. And that which thus girds up and makes all complete is the spirit of love. Hence the special word of the apostle, "*Above all these put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.*" We are nothing without charity. All the spiritual attainments in the world only droop and drag without this. No faith, no sac-

rifices, no hope, no eloquence, can supply its place. Therefore, over and above everything else, we must put on charity, or we have not yet come into the perfect attire of the new man.

Thus, then, are we to be clothed and adorned in that new life to which Christianity calls us. And thus arrayed, we may gratefully settle down in spiritual composure and quiet, sure that we are in fit attire for place in the communion of saints.

Notice now the second point,

How to Nurture and Sustain the New Man.

Here the apostle's words are somewhat compendious, but still very clear.

1. That which begets the new man must be its chief nutriment. Peter speaks of all true Christians as "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, *by the Word of God*, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Pet. 1 : 23). Hence also he exhorts us to "lay aside all malice, guile, hypocrisies, envies, and evil-speakings," and "as new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the Word, that we may grow thereby" (1 Pet. 2 : 1, 2). And to the same end Paul here admonishes us: "*Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom.*"

"The Word of Christ" does not mean simply what Christ spoke with His own lips when on earth. What He thus spoke of course takes the place of pre-eminence in all the records of divine Revelation; but the entire body of the inspired Word of truth is included all of which together is "the Word of Christ." What was spoken by the prophets and

apostles is His Word, as well as what He Himself spoke. They spoke by His Spirit and inspiration. He spoke to them and in them and through them; and the grand substance of all that they spoke and wrote was Himself and His great work of Redemption. There is no part of the Book of Revelation which He has not authenticated and acknowledged as His testimony to the truth, the burden of which He claimed as referring to Himself. The whole volume of Scripture is thus "the Word of Christ." It not only contains His personal discourses, the mystery of His redemptive purposes and work, the teachings and inspirations of the Holy Ghost sent by Him, but He is the substance and end of it, the kernel of the entire product, the abutments and the keystone of the arch, the central sun of the system to "give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." And to this "Word of Christ" we are to betake ourselves as the life-aliment of the new man, by which and in which all the creations of grace live and move and have their being.

We are to let it *dwell in us.* It is not to be a stranger to us. It is not to be left standing without or admitted only in occasional visits. It is not to be merely recognized and saluted at a distance. We are not to have only a slight or casual acquaintance with it. But it is to be taken into the soul as a familiar and beloved guest, and to have its home there. It is to dwell in us. As we take in and assimilate the food of the body that it may abide as part of our physical corporation, so we are to take in "the Word

of Christ" and let it become part of ourselves, the light and strength of our hearts, to warm, quicken, establish, direct, and govern us in all the principles and outgoings of our being. This implies the learning, pondering, and constant entertainment of it as the support and life of the soul, without which we must languish and die.

And this dwelling of the Word in us is to be "*richly*"—plentifully, abundantly, in a full and adequate manner. This means not its moral precepts only, nor a few things here and there that may most please our taste and thinking, nor the dogmatic portions only, nor the prophecies only, but the whole range of sacred truth as related to the past, present, and future—the entire doctrine of Revelation, without stint to any part. Not only the Gospels, but all the preceding Prophets, the succeeding Epistles, and the grand Apocalypse as well,—all come in to make up that richness of the Word of Christ which is to have place and home in our understandings and hearts for the feeding and strengthening of our faith, that we may grow to the full stature of men and women in Christ Jesus.

The same is moreover to be in us "*in all wisdom.*" That is to say, we are to try to reach and embrace all the light and truth which the Word is meant to give, and to use it for the conditioning of all our thinking, that it may so animate and move us that the divine Mind and Will may become embodied in all that we feel, attempt, and do.

One great reason why we have so many failures in Christian life, and so much leanness and feeble-

ness on the part of our modern professors, is that people do not half study or half know the true and blessed contents of the Word of Christ, and do not look into and ponder the length, breadth, depth, and height of God's gracious Revelation. The mine is rich enough; the well is full of the unfailing waters of life; but to make those riches ours, and to bring those waters forth to refresh and satisfy, ear and eye and soul must be given to it, and we must

> On precept precept scan, and line on line,
> Search, ponder, sift, compare, divide, combine,
> For truths that oft beneath the surface lie.

2. And ever striving to become informed, saturated, and at home with the Word of Christ, there is much else that may help to stimulate, sustain, and nourish the life of grace in the soul.

We can learn much from one another, and so we are all to be *teachers* of one another. For this mutual edification all have their measure of gifts and calling. We are much more influenced by one another than we know. Parents have largely the fashioning of the characters of their children. Men are mostly what they are made by their bringing up and associations. We are all members one of another in a deeper and more vital sense than we might suspect. And these relationships and influences may be utilized with wonderful power in the making and development of Christians and in the maintenance of spiritual life and growth. We are therefore to use them and seek to profit by them

just as the experience and principles of Christian life naturally prompt.

We can also "teach and admonish one another *in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in our hearts to the Lord.*" Poetry, music, art, —all can be made of avail as accessories, accompaniments, and conveyances of sacred truth and spiritual edification. Song began in heaven, and it is abundantly capable of helping and lifting the soul heavenward and of cheering our way thither. Chrysostom has said, "Those who call in David with the harp, call in Christ by him." And the intelligent and devout of all ages—prophets, priests, philosophers, reformers, the most eminent of God's servants—have been loud in their praises of music and holy song, and lavish in their encouragement and cultivation of them. Luther has said, "The devil flies at the voice of music; he will not stay where there is singing of hymns;" "Music makes people milder and gentler, more moral and more reasonable;" "Through music one forgets anger, impurity, pride, and other vices." One of the early Church-books of England has in it the statement, "The sober, discreet, and devout singing, music, and playing with organs, used in the service of God, are ordained to move the people to the sweetness of God's Word, the which is sung, and by that sweet harmony both to incite them to prayer and devotion, and also to put them in remembrance of the heavenly triumphant Church, where is everlasting joy, continual laud, and praise to God."

Precisely what different sorts of composition the

apostle meant by "psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs" we may not be able to trace. Sacred psalms, hymnic celebrations of the goodness and greatness of God, and lyric songs in praise of the Author of all mercies, found in the Scriptures themselves, are necessarily included, but not exclusive of various other kinds of poetic expressions of Christian truth and feeling arranged for musical rendering. The only requirements in the case are that they be "spiritual," not carnal and earthy; that they be informed "with grace," so as to give both delight and profit; that they be rendered "with the heart," and not simply with the lips and the affectation of the artist; and that the address be "unto the Lord," not unto angels, not to any mere creature. Such yeasty froth and vapid sentimentalism and nonsense as some would fain dignify with the name of Gospel hymns in our day are not in the list. But good and edifying hymns and music, joined with the learning and rich indwelling of the Word of Christ, belong to the sacred appointments for the nurture and sustenance of true Christian life.—Notice now,

III. How to Direct the New Man.

Here, too, the apostolic word is clear: "*Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.*"

Words and deeds comprehend all the activities of man. They may be utterances and doings of the inner man only, or of the outer man as well; they may be in the inchoate form of feelings and desires,

or in the embodied form of overt speech and act; but that which covers "whatsoever we do in word or deed" leaves nothing else of human activity to be considered. And whatsoever we do in word or deed is to come under a fixed rule; which rule is, that the doing shall be "in the name of the Lord Jesus" for the one part, and with thankfulness and grateful pleasure toward God for the other part.

1. All we do, if we would be Christians indeed, must be done "*in the name of the Lord Jesus.*" What is done in Christ's name is that which is done for His sake, by His help, according to His will, and for His glory. All done in obedience to Christ's commands, in reliance upon His grace, with a view to His honor and looking for acceptance through His merits, is done in His name. And so it is to be with all we do and say. It belongs to the new man to do nothing in word or deed which is not thus done. All our undertakings, adventures, employments, conversation, and endeavors—all our acts and speeches, public or private, in sacred things or in secular things—all that relates to our domestic affairs and arrangements, to our places of abode, to our changes of residence, to our engagements in life, and to the connections and friendships we form for ourselves and our children,—everything whatsoever of which we have the choice, control, and direction is to be thus conditioned. Anything contrary to Christ's Word and Will—anything upon which we cannot ask His blessing—anything which militates against His honor or contravenes the purposes for which He came into the world or cannot plead His

sanction—is not done in His name, and falls short of what is to mark the activities of the new man, the true Christian. If we undertake things in our own strength or simply for our own pleasure, aggrandizement, and glory, we serve only self, and do the works of the old man and not of the new. And even in matters which might seem to be indifferent in their nature, such as our eating, drinking, clothing, home-comforts, and other things of the kind, the rule still holds us bound to take that style of things which best accords with our Christian profession and our loyalty to Jesus. We are neither to eat, nor drink, nor clothe our bodies, nor use relaxations or pleasures, nor ply our vocations, nor indulge ourselves in any way, according to our own will and gratification if we have reason to believe that Christ does not approve it.

The rule may seem strict and far-reaching, and a poor showing toward its fulfilment may appear in the lives of most of us; but it is nevertheless the law of God for the direction of all our doings in word and deed if we would live the life of the new man in Christ Jesus. But,

2. It is not a burdensome or slavish rule. It binds to Jesus and to a devout and sacred style of life in Him; but the yoke is easy, and every right heart responds with joy and gladness to it. It involves no enslavement of the soul, but is the realization of its sweetest and truest freedom. Redeemed from the curse of the law by the meritorious obedience of our Saviour, justified freely by His grace, and under the daily protection of Him who is made unto us wis-

dom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, and pledges to save us unto the uttermost, it is but the natural, grateful, and joyous impulse of the soul to station all our doings in the name of Him who is the all-in-all of our salvation. Loving us as He does, and having washed us from our sins in His own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God, what can we do less than offer our bodies a living sacrifice to Him, and by all the energies and activities of our being give and ascribe to Him the glory and dominion always and for ever? Having begotten us again unto a lively hope by His resurrection from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us, what is there to which there is a louder call or a more transporting impulse than to turn our whole existence into one grateful song of blessing to God for such transcendent mercies?

No, no; it is no harsh and hard exaction now that whatsoever we do in word or deed be done in the name of the Lord Jesus, ever looking unto Him as the Author and Finisher of our faith. There is no worthier name in which to do anything. And if we have at all tasted and seen the grace of God in Him, our hearts must be dead and stony indeed not to be warmed and stirred to the cheerful giving of everything of our unworthy lives to Him who has redeemed us unto God by His blood and made us coheirs with Himself to all the glory and blessedness of the world to come. It is not that we may be redeemed, but because we have been redeemed, called, and regenerated, that we are thus to make our blessed

Redeemer the Alpha and Omega of our hearts and lives, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him. Not as our task, but as our joy—not as a law of bondage to constrain, but as an inward law of life to impel—not as a thing to earn favor, but as a happy thank-offering for gratuitous favor already bestowed —not as a matter of toil to make our way to heaven, but as a matter of gladness that a way to heaven has been made by which we now have liberty to enter into the holiest of all,—are we ever to have in view, in everything, the will and pleasure and glory and grace of Him through whom these unspeakable mercies have been made our own.

Ye see, then, dear friends, the nature of our calling and how to make that calling and election sure. Quickened by the Word of truth to newness of life in Christ Jesus, we see with what we are to seek to exemplify and adorn that life, how we are to sustain and nourish it, and how we are to regulate and direct all our activities so as to embody it. To the same let us, then, ever more and more give ourselves with all cheerfulness and holy zeal. Though our past has been sadly defective, let us try, by the divine help, to have a better record for the future. And as we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

Here in Thy royal presence, Lord, I stand;
I give myself, my all, to Thee;
Thou hast redeemed me by Thy precious blood;
Thine only will I be.
No love but Thine, but Thine, can me relieve,
No light but Thine, but Thine, will I receive—
No light, no love, but Thine!

Sixth Sunday after Epiphany.

2 PET. 1 : 16–21 : For we have not followed cunningly-devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty.

For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.

We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts:

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation.

For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

THESE are the utterances of a man advanced in life, long familiar with the things of which he is treating, mature in his knowledge and convictions, and well tried in everything relating to them. They were intended to be a last solemn testimony from an apostle of Christ who knew that he was shortly to lay off his earthly tabernacle. Their subject-matter and contents are also of very great moment to every one. May the good Lord, therefore, help us to consider them with the same earnest faith and devotion in which they were written!

At the time Peter wrote this Epistle the world was oppressively full of stories about the origins, appearances, and doings of the gods. Whether invented by poetry or philosophy, devised by superstition or fraud, or made up out of the floating and perverted relics of a primitive Revelation of a Redeemer to come, need not here be decided. The fact remains that the literature and common beliefs of the whole Gentile world were loaded down with these stories, and that the Jewish mind was also much given to similarly grotesque and weird fancies. They were what we call myths, fables, tales, and stories, seriously entertained, but destitute of truth. Early Christianity itself, after the apostles died, suffered somewhat from the taint of this inordinate zeal for the marvellous.

Modern skepticism has swung over to the opposite extreme, and refuses to give credit to anything miraculous or out of the common course. All the wonders of the genuine Christian Creed it places in the same category with these ancient myths and fables. The Incarnation, a Saviour at once the Son of God and the Son of man, the miracles by which Jesus attested His divinity and Christhood, and the wonders which marked His history throughout, are now complacently set down by some as nothing more than superstitious dreams, unworthy the serious regard or credence of rational men.

The venerable apostle anticipated this, and clearly foretold it. He foresaw that the time would come when men in their self-conceit would fail to discriminate between the real wonders of our faith and the

fables and falsities which then filled the world, and when the tendency would be to reject all alike as of one class. Hence, in giving his last testimony to those who should live after him, he made it a special point to record his solemn declaration that what he and his fellow-apostles taught respecting Christ and His power and coming is something wholly apart from the myths and fictions then current. He claimed to know fully whereof he testified, and proclaimed it in the face of death, once and for ever, as a matter of his own certain knowledge: "*We have not followed cunningly-devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*"

The items to which he thus refers cover all the chief wonders in our holy religion, past, present, and to come.

You will observe how everything centres in *a Person*. This is one of the distinguishing peculiarities of Christianity. It is not a philosophy or a moral code which can live or die without respect to its author. The Socratic or Baconian philosophy can stand and work its full effect, no matter what becomes of Socrates or Bacon—even though it were a question whether they ever lived. The same is true of all systems of morals, laws, and methods of investigating or construing truth. But it is not so with Christianity. That must stand or fall with its Author. Severed from the living Christ, there is nothing distinctive left in it. Doctrines are involved, but, so far as they are distinctively Christian, they are all doctrines concerning a Person—concerning Christ. If He be not what the Gospel takes and

propounds Him to be, then everything peculiar to Christianity necessarily goes overboard, and the whole Gospel scheme of salvation falls dead. The all-conditioning question in the case, as our Lord Himself has put it, is, "*What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is He?*"

What think ye of Christ? is the test
To try both your state and your scheme;
You cannot be right in the rest
Unless you think rightly of Him.
As Jesus appears to your view,
As He's apprehended or not,
So God is disposed toward you,
And mercy or wrath is your lot.

And what the apostle thought of Christ, and would have us think of Him, is clearly expressed. When he was yet young in His discipleship the Saviour once asked, "Whom say ye that I am?" Peter answered and said, "THOU ART THE CHRIST, THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD" (Matt. 16 : 15–17). Nor did he ever afterward forget the sealing benediction then pronounced upon Him as a divinely-illumined man in having come to this faith. Accordingly, when he came to write his dying testimony he meant to express precisely the same confession in styling the Saviour "OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST."

He uses the word *Jesus* not only as a name, but also in its exalted descriptiveness of the Person to whom it belongs. A messenger from heaven had given the command, "Thou shalt call His name JESUS; for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1 : 21). He was, and was to be, what His

name imports; and so the apostle here designates Him. The further designation, *the Christ*, is used in the same profoundly descriptive way. It denotes the One divinely anointed and sent to be "our" Saviour, and identifies Jesus as He who was promised and prophesied of from the beginning as God's Anointed. And when he further calls Him "*our Lord*," it is not in mere respectful compliment and deference, as from a disciple to a teacher, but in recognition and acknowledgment of a divine and worshipful Majesty. In his great Pentecostal sermon he spoke of Jesus as having been "delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God," taken, crucified, and slain, but also as raised again from the dead, exalted to God's own right hand, and constituted "both *Lord and Christ*" (Acts 2 : 22–36). The lordship spoken of is the same here as there. It embraces "all power in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28 : 18), exaltation and authority "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come" (Eph. 1 : 21), all things being put under Him excepting only the eternal Father, who put all things under Him (1 Cor. 15 : 27). Headship over all things to the Church as the Captain of our salvation is thus signified, and that Jesus Christ is the King of kings and Lord of lords, to whom all judgment is committed to command obedience, enforce His rule, allot destiny, and be the sole dependence of man for time and eternity.

Nor yet only this, but especially also "*the Power and Coming* of our Lord." Our blessed Saviour is

ever the Coming One. To all the Church before our era He was the Coming One, who was to bruise the serpent's head, bear the sins of many, bring in everlasting righteousness, possess the gates of His enemies, redeem Israel, set up a government of justice and judgment over all the earth, and reign in peace and accomplished salvation for the ages of ages. And hence, from the for ever past to the for ever future, His coming is going on, embracing the whole history of redemption. In the promises, prophecies, types, and administrations of the earlier times—in His incarnation, birth, ministry, death as the propitiation for our sins, resurrection for our justification, ascension to the right hand of the Father, and constitution and endowment of the Christian Church —also in His providential dealing out of destiny to men and nations, offering and imparting salvation and hope to believers, rebuking the wicked and rebellious, and preparing a people for His name,—He has been coming for ages, has come, and is still coming.

But much of His coming still impends, particularly His coming in power and glory for the great consummation. His children have not yet been revealed, nor lifted out of all their disabilities, nor brought to that eternal life and dominion to which they are called and sealed. His enemies have not yet been made His footstool. His kingdom exists only in mystery and spirit, and has not come to that full revelation everywhere described in His covenant promises. The curse still festers in all the earth, and misrule, injustice, and usurpation still oppress

and disgrace it. Groaning nature still sighs for redemption. Myriads of His people still lie under the power of death or suffer in corrupting tabernacles amid great fights of varied afflictions. The clouds that received Him out of the sight of His Church still cover Him. The whole attitude of His followers, in the body and out of the body, is still one of waiting, expectation, and prayer, ever crying, "Come, Lord Jesus!" "Thy kingdom come!" "How long, O Lord? how long?" And everywhere, in everything, we realize and see only beginnings that need completion—foundations awaiting their superstructure—preparations which have not reached their proper and promised consummation. Hence, as our anointed, appointed, and ever-living Saviour, Christ is still pre-eminently the Coming One, on whose revelation in invincible power everything in Christian hope depends. So true is this that the apostle Paul sums up everything of practical Christianity in two things: turning from idols to serve the living and true God, and waiting for His Son from heaven (1 Thess. 1 : 10).

There is, therefore, no reason for the embarrassment which some have shown in trying to explain what our apostle means by the making known of "*the power and coming of our Lord.*" It was the preaching of Jesus as the anointed Saviour, who has come, suffered, and received mediatorial dominion over all things, but also, and especially, as to come again in the exercise of His unlimited power, to raise the dead, give reward unto His servants, take to Himself the sovereignty of the nations, destroy

the destroyers of the earth, and complete that "restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3 : 21). Anything less than this does not fill out the full import of the words and falls short of all the records of what the apostles taught. And this it is which Peter here asserts to be solid truth, with nothing in common with the myths and fables of which the world of his day was so full.

But he does not rest with mere assertion. He also gives the evidences and foundations on which he based his teaching and belief. Christianity presents nothing for which it cannot give reasons. The apostle refers to two grand pillars on which he rested for the unmistakable certainty of what he and his fellow-apostles taught and preached on this subject. And these two pillars are: First, what he saw and experienced on the Mount of Transfiguration; and, second, the showings of the prophetic Word.

There is nothing so convincing and conclusive as what we see and hear and experience for ourselves. And such evidence the apostle declares he had when he was with the Saviour in the holy mount, being "an eye-witness of His majesty."

The divinest and most exalted descriptions found in the literature of man are those which celebrate the glory of the Christ. The triumphal odes of Deborah and Hannah, the exultant psalms of David, the lofty poetry of Isaiah, the gorgeous and dazzling pictures of Ezekiel and Habakkuk, as well as some of the grand earlier utterances of Moses, Job, and even Balaam,—all have their highest touches from

the expected Saviour's majesty and achievements. In the Song of Solomon the bride of Christ herself comes forward to describe her Beloved, using the most glowing images and the intensest expressions of human language to set Him forth, and proclaiming Him the foremost among myriads and the embodiment of all the loveliest of lovelinesses (Song of Sol. 5 : 10–16). But nowhere, in all the songs of the inspired or in any other showings to mortal men, has there ever been a sublimer display or a more imposing demonstration of the divine majesty and glory of Christ, His coming and kingdom, than that which was witnessed by Peter, James, and John on the mount of His transfiguration. That was the superlative of all His earthly Epiphanies hitherto. There, for once, the veil was completely lifted, Praying as a man, He suddenly broke out in the very radiancy of God. His face shone with the brightness of the noonday sun. His very raiment glowed in glistening whiteness for which earth has no word or symbol. The glory was not from without, but from within, welling forth as from the eternal Source of light resident in Himself. "Very God of very God" showed itself in its own ineffable garb. The disciples beheld, and trembled in adoring wonder, and afterward ever recurred with delight to the sublime scene.

'Twas the sweetest of hours, when in luminous vision
Their senses were steeped in that splendor Elysian,
The thrice-blessed three!
Who, heavy with sleep, on the rough mountain-heather
Sank in weakness of earth, but were strengthened together
Heaven's brightness to see.

Transfigured before them the dead and the living,
His glory primeval, inherent, outgiving,
He grew to a God!

Was it a dream—a mere vision of the night? Could three different men dream the same thing at the same instant and be alike so profoundly affected by a mere freak of their own fancies? Their eyes were open. Their senses were awake. They saw and felt the cloud that came over the mountain, and trembled as they entered it. It was verily their blessed Master whom they beheld in all this glory. With Him were two other beings from other worlds, participant in the glory. They were men who once lived on earth—*Moses*, the great lawgiver and leader of Israel, who died in Moab's mountains and was buried by the Lord where no man could ever find his sepulchre; and *Elijah*, the great prophet of fire, whom God had caught up to heaven in a chariot of flame without passing through the gates of death. The witnessing disciples knew them, and heard them speak, and understood their words as they conversed with the transfigured Jesus "and spake of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem." And besides all this, there came forth a mighty voice from on high, at which the mountain vibrated, saying, "THIS IS MY BELOVED SON, IN WHOM I AM WELL PLEASED." (See Matt. 17 : 1–8; Luke 9 : 28–36).

There could be no deception, no mistake. Each saw and heard and felt just what the other did. The several accounts, each with its own marks of independence, correspond with each other. And if three sober-minded and honest men were mistaken in what

they severally and together saw with their own eyes, heard with their own ears, and knew from the testimony of all their senses, what can we credit? or how ever know anything? If all the avenues of human knowledge and conviction are capable of attesting a reality, then this was reality, as these men ever declared it was, and so wrote in the face of martyrdom and eternal judgment.

And as this scene of the Transfiguration was true, with no shadow of fable about it, so what the apostles preached and taught in making known "the power and coming of our Lord" is necessarily true also. The eternal God and Father, rising from His throne and speaking from the excellent glory, there proclaimed Jesus *His Son* as none other ever was or can be—*His Son* in the sense of the nearest, dearest, and Only-begotten of the Father, in whom the highest divine pleasure rested and ever rests. And what was thus spoken by God Himself was equally demonstrated in the facts and surroundings of the exhibit. The man Christ Jesus there appeared *as God*—the central light in a scene of uncovered Deity—the Lord and King of glory to whom the most illustrious saints in heaven came as ministering angels—the self-possessed of all the power and majesty to raise the dead, translate the living, vanquish the powers of darkness, and reign for ever, the mighty God, the Prince of Peace. How, then, could they be otherwise than invincibly confident that here was no cunningly-devised fable, but absolute verity and truth?

But the apostle refers to still another ground of certainty in the matter of Christ's power and coming.

There has never been a period of our world in which there was no Word from God. Sacred prophets, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, have been from the very beginning of our race. The line started with Adam himself, and may be traced down through the ages in Seth, Enoch, Methusaleh, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Samuel, David, Isaiah, Malachi, and hundreds more, even to the aged Simeon, who sung his exultant *Nunc dimittis* with the infant Child of Mary in his arms. By common credit of the best men among whom they lived, by multitudes of special and unlikely predictions fulfilled to the letter in the course of years and ages after them, and by heavenly endowments which admitted of no dispute, they gave ample demonstration that God had chosen them as channels of communication between Himself and their fellow-men. An adequate collection of their more important prophetic deliverances was duly treasured up in sacred records for perpetual preservation and authentic reference touching the mind, purposes, and promises of Jehovah. These holy records existed in the time of the apostles in the form of what we still recognize as the Old-Testament Scriptures. The world at large knew but little of them, and much perverted and abused what it did know. "Darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people," and these prophetic records, though full of light themselves, shone only as a feeble lamp amid the general obscurity until the night should wear away and the pure daylight dawn. So Peter says the matter stood then; and it is not greatly different now, nor will be till the glorious

Daystar which now shines in our hearts shall rise upon the world in its full brightness to usher in the Day that is yet to come.

The prophetic Word is a light indeed, and men might gather from it infinitely more than they do if they would only bring their benighted souls to it and let it shine in upon them to control and fashion their thinking. But many do not half believe it, and fewer still consent to light their lamps from it. Some are so self-wise that they think it the path of sober piety to beware of it and to keep away from the particular study of it, as if better calculated to lead astray than to illuminate in the truth. This shows how much some modern church teachers differ from those whom God sent and inspired as the princes of right instruction; for Peter here tells us that we do well to take heed to it as the only genuine light to help us through the squalor of this dark world. That prophetic Word was a mighty instrument in the hands of Christ and the first Christians to prove the Messiahship and divine glory of our Lord; and therein is the sure proof of the reality of His power and coming. The testimony of Jesus is inmixed with the whole spirit of it as its one great central theme from first to last. By it the Saviour Himself assured and established the hearts of His disturbed and half-doubting disciples when, "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Luke 24 : 27). Nor can there be a candid and thorough examination of the "sure word of prophecy" which does not bring conviction to every

mind unwarped by prejudice, as to all that the apostles taught respecting Christ. Therefore the apostle commends us and all people to the study of what was spoken by these holy men as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, that, comparing and construing prophecy with prophecy and prediction with fulfilment, we may see and know that the Christian faith is not fable. Nay, the prophetic Scriptures are themselves another Mount of Transfiguration, which we may all ascend and see for ourselves the divine majesty, power, and coming of our ever-blessed Saviour. Yes,

> Within this ample Volume lies
> The mystery of mysteries;
> And happiest they of human race
> To whom their God has given grace
> To read, to fear, to hope, to pray,
> To lift the latch, to force the way;
> And better had they ne'er been born
> That read to doubt or read to scorn.

Dear friends, there is no reason why we should ever be ashamed of our Christian faith. It is rooted in the whole Book of Inspiration. It is attested by competent and honest eye-witnesses, who tried it to the full. All its influences on the virtue and happiness of human society demonstrate its living power for good. And it is impossible that a mythic fable should have such a showing. Believing it may entail upon us companionship with the lowly and despised in this world, but what is there in all the round of things to take its place or to fulfil its blessed offices? Sullen unbelief may stigmatize us

as credulous and superstitious dreamers; but what sublimer assurances, what better-founded hopes, what purer relationships, what more blessed anticipations can heart conceive or the universe furnish than those embodied in the glorious testimony of our Lord?

Nor are the people who reject and contemn it such luminaries of wisdom as to make it safe to follow them in a matter like this. Their lives, principles, works, and death-scenes are far from proving them the sort of leaders whom prudent and virtuous men and women should accept as guides to honor and to happiness. We scan their ranks in vain to find apostles of purity, peace, good order, and salvation. The Augustines and the Chrysostoms, the Luthers and the Knoxes, the Bacons and the Lockes, the Miltons and the Newtons, the Pascals and the Hales, the Gustavus Adolphuses and the Washingtons, the Pitts and Burkes and Edwardses and Adamses and Websters—to say nothing of the mighty names that shine illustrious in the Book of God—are not found on their lists. And where, indeed, is the wisdom and virtue of that teaching which would have us give up the Gospel of Jesus, Peter, Paul, and John for the Gospel of Jacobins, of mud, and of dynamite?

Then let us not be shaken in our confidence in the evangelic mysteries. At the worst, we are still on the side of safety. In the glorious company of the apostles, in the goodly fellowship of the saints, in the noble army of the martyrs, and in the society of the great and good and wise of every nation, we are not without prestige that augurs well. If in such communion we fail of right illumination and eternal

blessedness, our modest submission will be no aggravation of our loss. If these men of God have erred, it is in a heavenly region. If they wandered, it is in fields of light. If they were mistaken, it was in honest virtue. If they aspired, it was a transfiguring adventure that made them good as they were great. And such aberrations we can well afford to share, consoling ourselves withal in the contemplation of the many blessed spirits who in the same holy cause have toiled and shone and suffered.

But should it be that the mistake is on the other side, what then shall be the unbeliever's fate? What words of incurable self-condemnation and remorse shall then occupy the tongues now so glib in profanity and jest at sacred things! How will those cheeks now flushed with vile excesses and railing at the glorious Christ blanch in the dark prison-houses of despair which many are so zealously building for themselves! How will those souls, now so hilarious in guilt and blasphemy, cower before the omnific majesty of the eternal Judge when He cometh with His holy myriads to execute judgment upon His enemies for all their ungodly works and all their hard speeches against Him, His people, and His everlasting truth!

Nor is it ever wise and just to frame our judgments according to appearances in this world. Truth is broad and deep, and does not show itself in full except to the eye of God, to whom we must look for its revelation. Here was a poor, meek, homeless man, beset with griefs and sorrows, whom few respected and His nation despised—whom this world

gave only a stable to be born in, and awarded a robe of mockery, a crown of thorns, and a cruel cross; yet He had sublimest standing in heaven as the true Son of God, and wore in the form of suffering man a power and majesty which the very angels adored. And if celestial messengers were sent to-day to find the man dearest to God, most participant in the divine nature, most akin to the saints in glory, where, suppose ye, would they find him? Would it be at the head of armies, in the halls of science, among the lords of literature, in a chair of state, on the judge's bench, in the popular pulpit, in some mansion of the rich and great? Or would it be far away from the scenes of scrambling greed, carnal ambition, worldly gayety, and high estate—in some humble solitude, in some lowly cottage where bread is scarce and the hearth-fires languish and tears are plenty, and the soul has no friend but God—in some dingy pauper lodge, whither the smile of love and the touch of tenderness never come? We cannot tell. But this we can believe, and in it establish our confidence: that God's own co-eternal Son once appeared in poverty and persecution among men, passing from village to village, with no place where to lay His head, and died the death of the cross for our salvation; and that at the time appointed He will surely come from the throne of His glory in heaven with judicial majesty and power, to the utter discomfiture of His foes and the everlasting redemption of them that put their trust in Him. "For we have not followed cunningly-devised fables."

Septuagesima Sunday.

1 Cor. 10: 1–5: Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea;

And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;

And did all eat the same spiritual meat;

And did all drink the same spiritual drink: (for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.)

But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

LL history is at the same time prophecy. The shadows of the future are all the while intermingled with the doings and occurrences of the past and the present. Knowing fully what has been, and what is, we also have the outlines of what shall be.

This is specially true with regard to religious matters and God's interpositions, whether of mercy or judgment. What is enacted at one period, in one sphere, always has at the bottom of it something of what is to be at another period and in another sphere The substance of every dispensation is the same, and the forms it puts on for one occasion must needs in some manner express the same things and be the forerunners of corresponding forms taken on for other occasions. And though we have two Testaments, the Old and the New, still, one is the begin-

ning of the other, and the Old is a prophecy, preparation, and illustration of the New. The Old was ever looking forward to what should be, and the New is ever referring back to what has been, whilst the same imagery and terminology is largely common to both.

An instance in point is furnished by the text. According to the inspired apostle, the deliverance of the children of Israel from their Egyptian taskmasters, and the marvels which they experienced in the wilderness, had, as their under-thought, the spiritual deliverance and wonders in Christ Jesus. Nay, the actual Gospel itself was in these ancient things as the real kernel of them, and imparted its virtues through them. In this aspect, then, let us look at the text and seek to profit by it.

In enumerating what he would not that we should be ignorant of, the apostle mentions three things:

I. A Sacred Baptism;
II. A Heavenly Bread;
III. A Spiritual Drink.

I. The Baptism.

Concerning this it may be remarked—

1. *It was not an Immersion.* Immersion may be a baptism, but there may be baptism, and baptism of the most sacred and important kind, which is not immersion at all. Judith ceremonially purified herself at a spring in the valley of Bethulia, in the midst of the camp of Holofernes, as a religious preparation

for the deed of deliverance which she there wrought, and the Greeks called it *baptism*, though every circumstance of the case goes to prove that it could not have been an immersion. The law prescribed for the cleansing of one who had touched anything dead was that "a clean person shall take hyssop and dip it in the water and *sprinkle it upon him;* . . . the clean person shall *sprinkle* upon the unclean;" and the observance of this ceremony of sprinkling the son of Sirach calls a *baptism*. Paul says it was the ashes of an heifer *sprinkling* the unclean that sanctified to the purification of the flesh, and calls all such Jewish lustrations so many *baptisms*. The Pharisees of the Saviour's time upon every return from market deemed it necessary to purify themselves, which was ordinarily done by washing their hands; and the observance of this ceremony the Gospel calls a *baptism*. We read in Acts that there appeared cloven tongues like as of fire alighting upon the disciples, and the same is called "the *baptism* of the Holy Ghost;" also, it is said of others that the Holy Ghost was *shed forth, poured out, fallen upon* them, which is likewise called being *baptized* of the Holy Ghost. And so here: the Egyptians were immersed, and perished by their immersion, but it is not called a baptism; whilst the Israelites passed through an open pathway between the divided waters, and "walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea," and did not so much as wet their feet; and yet Paul says they were "all *baptized* unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." Let no one, therefore, presume to tell us that there can be no legitimate, no sacred baptism

without immersion, for he undertakes to say what is not true.

2. *It was a Baptism of Infants as well as Adults.* Paul says distinctly that *all* who came out of Egypt in that grand deliverance, *all* who passed through the sea, "were *all baptized* unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." Were there no children and infants in all that company? The Bible says it consisted of "about six hundred thousand on foot, that were men, *besides children.*" So, then, there were *children* among them, and children *not* "*on foot;*" and the apostle says they "were *all* baptized," and that the same is an "example" for us under the new dispensation. Let no one, therefore, undertake to teach us that children and infants are not proper subjects for Baptism, or that they are entirely excluded from the benefits of this holy sacrament, for such teaching is against God's Word.

3. *This Baptism was an effectual Riddance of the People of their Cruel Taskmasters and Oppressors.* It not only put the sea between them and Egypt, but it overwhelmed and drowned the warrior hosts who pursued them. "The Egyptians pursued and went after them to the midst of the sea, even all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. . . . And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared, . . . and the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea; and the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them." Thus,

likewise, does Baptism now separate between Christians and their slavery to the law, and thus do its waters overwhelm and drown the old enemies that afflicted us, even our sins.

Timid and misgiving Christians sometimes think back upon the severe exactions of the law and the fearfulness of their guilt under that law, and tremble and distress themselves lest they should yet be overtaken by those dreadful enemies. But all this comes of a lack of indoctrination in the true evangelic faith, and argues that they do not yet truly believe. The true Israel of God see things in another light. They see how Baptism into Christ has completely and for ever washed away and drowned their old slavery and sins, and they exult and say, "I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and my song, and *He* hath become my salvation." This perpetual resurrecting of the Egyptians to alarm and disturb us is a poor, bootless, and unnecessary business, with which Christians should learn to dispense, that they may enter into the true joy of their perfect and perpetual deliverance in Christ Jesus. If we take our Baptism for what it really is, and as our Lord means it to be to us, we will see every Egyptian effectually drowned in its waters, never to come against us any more.

4. *This Baptism was a Glad and Glorious Change to Israel.* It transferred them from Africa to Asia—from the land of Ham and blackness and bondage and helplessness to shores bordering on the primitive homes of their fathers and kindred of former

days—from the land of exile on the way to the land of promise. From slaves they became free—from oppressed tribes they were constituted an independent nation. Their Baptism was to them a regeneration, a new birth—their transfer to an entirely new order of things—a mighty demarcation between two different styles of life and relations. It brought them across the boundaries separating between two distinct quarters of the globe, two distinct civilizations, two distinct orders of government and manner of being. It entirely dissolved one allegiance, and introduced them to quite another—the like figure whereunto Baptism doth now serve us. And though ever afterward living apart from all maritime pursuits, in all the religious imagery, the sacred songs, and the highborn poetry of the Hebrew nation we find a constant recurrence to these waters by which they were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea, showing how constantly that grand event of their national and spiritual birth unto a new life was kept in mind, and what thrilling importance ever attached to it in the imaginations of God's chosen people, and how Christians should value and cherish their Baptism into the Lord Jesus and His holy Church.

Queen Cleopatra once invited Antony to a costly supper, at which she set before him nothing but a little dish of vinegar, but in that vinegar was concealed a pearl worth millions of gold. So is it with holy Baptism. To the outward eye it is nothing but ordinary water, but in it God has put all the treasures of heaven and its waters invest precious pearls.

An aged man who had been very fortunate in his time, once discoursing to his company about the same, was asked what he regarded the best and most fortunate day he had lived. Reverently and solemnly he answered, "None other than that which was also your best and most fortunate day—namely, the day of Baptism."

How strange, then, that people should make so little of Baptism, be so indifferent as to whether they are baptized or not, and esteem it so small a matter to let their children die or grow up without it! For an Israelite to be thus unappreciative of the Baptism unto Moses would have been a renunciation of his nation, a denial of the faith, and a relinquishment of all share in the hopes of God's people. The apostle would therefore not have us ignorant how the fathers were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea.

II. The Heavenly Bread.

The fathers were not only baptized, but also "*did all eat the same spiritual meat.*" The reference is to the mysterious *manna* on which the children of Israel subsisted during their pilgrimage in the wilderness. This was something distinct from those drops of honey-dew which are said still to form on the tamarisk-bushes found in some parts of the region traversed; for it was found on the ground, and was hard and could be ground in a mill and baked in an oven. David calls it corn of heaven and bread of angels, which fell only in the wilderness of Sinai, and only on six days of the week, and

melted in the sun, and putrefied if kept over any night save the night before the Sabbath. It was *food*, and not physic; and hence is also to be distinguished from the manna of the apothecary-shops, which is the dried sap or gum exuded from trees. Concerning the true manna of the text it is to be remarked,

1. *It was a direct product of God*, with which human agency had nothing to do. It came down from heaven. As rain cometh down from the clouds, so God rained the manna about the camp of Israel. Christ hath taught us that it was a type or figure of Himself—of the incarnate Son of God, of His body and flesh. He is the true Bread of His people in their earthly pilgrimage; and the bread which He giveth is His flesh, which He hath given for the life of the world (John 6:48–58). And God sent Him and prepared His body for Him. "This is the Bread which cometh down from heaven," without agency of man to bring it down.

2. The manna was *a new and miraculous product.* There was something of nature about it, the remnants of which may still be traced in those regions; but it was something vastly more than nature in substance, in condition, in quality, and in quantity. It was something heavenly—"bread from heaven," "angels' food"—mysteriously existing prior to its appearance on earth, and yet earthly and for earthly use, and then first existing in such sort and quantity. And so Christ, the true Manna, in his two natures in one personality, was a new product in the universe. The like of Him never was before. And yet there

was a Son of God before, and there was a sort of humanity before, but here was the heavenly in the earthly—the divine in the human—in a new and mysterious oneness which is the wonder of the universe, as the manna in the wilderness was the wonder of the camp of Israel. When they saw it they said one to another, "It is *manna;* for they wist not what it was."

3. *It was the bread and sustenance* of the pilgrim Hebrews. "He *fed them* with manna;" on this they lived. And so Christ is the bread and sustenance of all spiritual life. He came and exists for this very purpose, that men might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. The Jews of His time laughed at the idea of His giving His flesh for man to eat, and yet His saying is for ever true: "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, ye have no life in you;" for His flesh is meat indeed. As the living Father sent Him, and He lives by the Father, so he that eateth Him, even he shall live by Him. And this spiritual bread of life God is ever giving in His Word and sacraments, and especially in the Holy Supper, concerning which He says, "Take, eat; *this is my body*, broken for you," and in which His life-giving Self is offered, imparted, and received, so that they who believingly partake have eternal life abiding in them.

4. *It had to be Gathered and Appropriated in its Season.* In the morning, and every day except the holy rest-day, it was to be found, but at no other time; and then it had to be collected by the people themselves, though altogether a provision of God's

free bounty. And the same is true of the spiritual bread. The Word cannot profit if we go not to hear it, or fail to search for the truth or neglect to appropriate it when found. Neither can the sacrament benefit if we do not use it. Our negligence and unbelief cannot unmake God's gracious ordinances, but will inevitably prevent any saving effect from them upon us—just as those who went not to gather the manna that fell could have no good of it. There were those who disparaged and loathed it, and wished for Egypt's flesh-pots; but, taking the flesh in preference to the manna, they died. And so there be those who despise and contemn Christ, and disregard His Word and sacraments, now; but they have no life in them, and never can have life whilst they continue in such a habit and temper. By God's manna, daily gathered, the pilgrim Hebrews lived; and only by God's Manna, the blessed Christ, daily sought and appropriated, can any soul be preserved unto life eternal. Through that ancient manna in the wilderness some gleams and glimpses of Christ were vouchsafed to the fathers; neither did they fail to taste something of His nourishing sweetness, for they did all eat of the same spiritual meat on which Christians feed, and which, whoso eateth, hath eternal life, and Christ will raise him up at the last day. And hence the apostle would not that we should be ignorant how the fathers did all eat of that spiritual meat.

III. The Spiritual Drink.

They "did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed

them." I need not rehearse the story. You remember the thirst and the murmuring at Rephidim, and how Jehovah directed Moses to a rock in Hebron, which he smote, and the glad waters gushed out and flowed in the wilderness like a river. Of those waters the people drank, and their cattle, and were satisfied; nor did the same ever fail them so long as they were needed. Neither can we be at a loss with regard to their spiritual significance. The inspired apostle tells us in the text, "*that Rock was Christ.*" It prefigured Him, and in drinking of it there was also something of a spiritual drinking of the blessed waters of life which issue from Him.

Note here—

1. This drink was *from a rock.* Christ is a Rock, solid in character, durable, a good foundation, a grand and impregnable refuge and defence. The rock is the image of unchangeableness, strength, and permanence. Hence the Old Testament calls God the Rock, and this is a title belonging to none but God. "Who is a Rock save our God?" And this rock of Horeb had God upon it, thus pointing to the deity of Christ, and identifying Him with God at the same time that He was man. He is the Rock as He is God, and as through Him the eternal Jehovah causeth the living waters for thirsty men to come forth.

2. This drink *came forth through the smiting of the rock.* Everything was dust and drought until the rod of Moses fell upon it, but then the crystal flood broke forth. Moses was to smite the rock once, and only once. At a subsequent period, when these

waters were withheld to try the faith of the people, he was directed to *speak*—simply to *speak*—to the rock, in order to have them flow again; but he disobeyed and smote it, at which God was displeased, and allowed him not to enter the Promised Land. Christ *once* suffered and *once* endured the stroke of the law, that the waters of life might flow for perishing men, but only once. There could be no salvation without His being smitten, for without the shedding of blood is no remission; and by one offering of Himself he hath for ever perfected them that believe in Him. The spring of redemption was in His passion. Salvation is only through the cross. But He suffered once for all, never again to be smitten.

3. This rock *followed them.* As the sequence of this one smiting of the sacred rock in Horeb, the pilgrim Israelites were ever supplied. It was as if that material rock was present wherever they encamped. Whenever they needed water it was sufficient to speak to the rock in order to be amply supplied. The blood of Christ gives out its stream of saving virtues continually. There is no need of asking who shall ascend into heaven to bring Him down from above, or who shall descend into the deep to bring Him up from the dead; the Rock is ever near us, and in all the wilderness of this world, wherever a thirsty soul is found, the Fountain flows at the voice of the Word. The cup of the New Testament runs over with its refreshing waters, and the chalice of the Holy Supper conveys them, that we may be always drinking and never thirst any more. We

must get us out of Christendom and out of the world itself to get clear of the presence of this Rock and the river of blessing that issues from it.

4. Of these waters *all Israel was privileged to partake.* They were free to all, and they sufficed for all. Salvation is for every one who will take it. The invitation is, "*Ho! every one that thirsteth,* come ye to the waters." Or, if a New-Testament word be needed, Christ Himself has furnished it where He says: "*If any man thirst,* let him come unto Me, and drink." And lest any one should doubt on the subject, He yet again spoke from heaven, and commanded it to be written to the churches, "*Whosoever will,* let him take the water of life freely."

Thus we see what those things are of which the apostle wished the Corinthians not to be ignorant, and why he was so deeply concerned to have them understood and pondered. They are the very heart-things of our holy Christianity, without an adequate knowledge of which we cannot be right Christians. They are the vital things, themselves presenting the very life and bread and drink of saintship and salvation. To be ignorant of them is to be a heathen, a mere child of disordered nature, without God and without hope in the world; and to despise and disparage them is death temporal and eternal. For with many of those who came up out of Egypt God was not well pleased. They lusted after evil things, and were overthrown in the wilderness. They ate and drank God's meat and drink and went after other gods and committed fornication, and there fell in one

day three-and-twenty thousand. They despised their Rock, tempted Christ, and murmured against Him, and deadly plagues fell upon them, and they were destroyed of the destroyer. And these things happened unto them for ensamples, and are written for our admonition, in these last ages of the world. "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the Gospel preached, as well as unto them; but the Word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." How earnestly, then, should each look up and ever cry—

Rock of Ages! cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee!
Let the Water and the Blood,
From Thy riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the perfect cure,
Save me, Lord, and make me pure.

Sexagesima Sunday.

2 Cor. 12 : 1-9 : It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.

I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven.

And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;)

How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in my infirmities.

For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth; but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me.

And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

E sometimes speak of that "bourne from which no traveller returns," and lament that no one of those who have crossed the dark stream has ever come back to tell us what that country is or to bring us report of the mysterious land which lies beyond. In this we do injustice to ourselves and what the good providence

of God has done and arranged to enlighten and confirm our faith. Men *have* crossed the boundaries of this present life and come back to tell of their visions and experiences. Not only has He who could not be holden of death come to us from that world, and returned after being dead to assure us of its reality and wealth, but a whole order of God's servants at various times and ages have risen into what lies beyond and above this present life, and come down again to tell and record for us what they saw and heard. Isaiah and Ezekiel and John were men of this rare and elect order. And in the text we have account of still another.

It is Paul the apostle who is here speaking, and it is of himself he speaks, though in the third person, as if a distinction were to be drawn between the natural Paul and the Paul in this state of transport. What he describes was a sort of trance. The record is that he "was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words," and yet he was recovered to this present life to write about it to his friends and fellow-believers for their comfort and assurance.

It is not much worth our while to pry into the manner of this rapture, or try to unravel the psychological questions involved in it. The apostle himself tells us that he did not understand it, and we are not likely to become any wiser about it than he.

Man has many capabilities of which we know almost nothing, and God hath chosen many methods of making His messengers acquainted with what He wished to make sure to them or to have communicated to His people. Sometimes there was an aud-

ible voice, with or without visible manifestations, which they only could see or hear. Sometimes dreams, or "visions of the night," were the mediums of converse with the invisible world and its intelligences. Sometimes there was simply an inspiration —an ecstatic lifting of the mind and emotions to perceive and express what was above and beyond the natural powers. We know that there may be such concentration of thought, such intensity of mental application, such powerful absorption in an object of contemplation, as for the time to free one from the senses altogether, so that man forgets his body—loses it, indeed—and soars away to matters wholly beyond the reach of the senses, and sees what eye cannot see and hears what ear cannot hear. Such seizure or spiritual rapport was not uncommon with the prophets. It was sometimes so powerful as to affect the body also, and to transfer it along with the soul, as in the case of Ezekiel, in the case of Philip after baptizing the eunuch, and perhaps in the case of John when he was contemplating the wondrous scenes of the Apocalypse. Hence the uncertainty of Paul in the case before us as to whether he was in the body or out of the body. It may have been either, and still not have been much different from the experiences of other men of God in getting the visions and revelations they have given us. If the passage in Acts (22 : 17) which speaks of Paul's praying in the temple and being "in a trance" refers to what he describes in the text, the intimation would seem to be that the activities of the body were for the time suspended and the outward senses locked

up, while the spirit was busy with scenes and objects quite beyond the range of the earthly senses. That there was some kind of locomotion—some ereption out of one place so as to be present in another—is clearly affirmed; for he was "caught up into Paradise;" but whether it was a bodily or simply a spiritual transfer the apostle was himself unable to determine. All that he could say was, that he had "visions and revelations of the Lord," and that in these visions and revelations he was "caught up to the third heaven, . . . caught up into Paradise."

There is, then, such a place as heaven, or Paradise, above and beyond this present life. On this point some are skeptical, and to others the whole thing is so dim, distant, and unsubstantial that it is not much more to them than a poetic fancy or pleasant dream, which does not come to them as a thing of substance and reality. Because none of us have ever been in that world, some have doubts in regard to it. But there is nothing unreasonable about it. It agrees with all the feelings and intuitions of the soul, as well as with the testimonies of Revelation. It is only from the senses and the imagination that doubts and questionings arise. The eye fixes on the lifeless body, on the wan features and the motionless limbs, and sees no further trace of the activity of that spirit which once was there; the imagination follows the wasted and decomposing frame into the dark tomb, there to decay and waste away to common dust; and so the impression comes with saddening power that all is over—that death leaves nothing more of the

beloved being who has fallen under its power. Did we consult reason alone, there would be enough to make us think that such cannot be the ultimate end of an intelligent spirit. We have more evidence that we have souls than that we have bodies. We are surer that we think, feel, and will than that we have material and extended limbs and organs, for we cannot know that we have head, hands, and feet except by means of the mind. Philosophers have said much of the weakness of evidence to prove the reality of matter, but none of them have ever questioned the reality of mind and thought. And the possession of such a spiritual nature naturally implies a spiritual world, and hence modes of spiritual existence unconditioned by coarse material organisms —a life beyond and above this present life—a heaven, a Paradise. And with the clear testimonies before us that Jesus visibly ascended after His death and resurrection to some supernal place, where Stephen saw Him, and whence He also appeared and spoke to Paul and John; that the good in departing this life go to Paradise and are comforted in the bosom of Abraham; and that Paul in his lifetime had experience of a personal presence and observation in heaven and in Paradise,—how can we reasonably have any doubt or question on the subject?

That Paul in these marvellous experiences was transported to two separate places there is reason to believe. He speaks of them under two distinct names. He speaks of what had happened to him in the plural, "visions," as though there had been a transport to more than one department of the spirit-

ual world. He also duplicates the account of his mysterious transport, and connects the one with one name, and the other with a different name. We may therefore take "the third heaven" as one part of the spiritual world, and "Paradise" as another; to both of which he says he was similarly "caught up." And although we may not be able precisely to identify either, and may in general contemplate both in one and the same view, there seems to be a real distinction between them.

The apostle speaks of three heavens. One is the atmosphere which surrounds our world—the heaven in which the fowls fly, through which the clouds move, and out of which the rains fall. Another is the space beyond our atmosphere containing the orbs of the sky. The third is the particular place, far in the celestial heights, where the glory of God for ever shines, whence the divine administrations extend out to all parts of the universe, whither Christ has gone and is seated at the right hand of the Father almighty, and whence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. And to this "third heaven" the apostle was "caught up," where he saw sights and heard words.

"Paradise" cannot be this third heaven, for Christ and the penitent thief were to be together "in Paradise" immediately upon their death; but Christ did not ascend to the right hand of eternal Majesty until forty days after his resurrection from among the dead.

Up to the time of Christ's resurrection all persons at their decease went to the place of departed spirits,

called *Sheol* by the Hebrews and *Hades* by the Greeks. This Hades had two compartments—the one for the good, the other for the bad—both of which together were called *Hades*. But that part of Hades which was the receptacle for the disembodied spirits of the good was called *Paradise*. So the Saviour called it when He said to the penitent thief as they both hung dying on the cross, "*This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.*" It was an under-world at that time—a part of Hades. But since Christ's descent into hell, and His going in the power of His victory to preach His triumph to "the spirits in prison," Paradise is no longer a part of Hades—no longer an under-world. It is written that He then "led captivity captive," brought out from Hades all the saints detained there, and lifted them to a Paradise which is now above. No departed saint since then goes to Hades. The gates of that under-world cannot prevail against Christ's Church. Paradise now is above, so that Paul could reach it only by being "caught *up*." It is still the place of the departed spirits of the good, but it is no longer a part of Hades. It is an independent realm of its own, and vastly more exalted than the former place of departed spirits.

Just where it is located is not for us to tell. Paul was transported first to the third heaven, and then to Paradise. Both have location, but where we know not. Bengel considers Paradise "an inner recess of the third heaven;" but that can hardly be the case. It matters not; it is a heavenly world—a world where the presence of Christ is manifested to

the inmates, and where the spirits of the good are in peaceful "waiting for the adoption—to wit, the redemption of the body."

We must therefore also distinguish between these two places seen by Paul and the final abode of the resurrected and glorified saints. As none of the wicked are yet in the final hell, so none of the saints are yet in their final heaven. They are in Paradise, but they are not yet in the New Jerusalem, the golden city, which is to be their glorious and abiding home. The body is not redeemed until the resurrection; and while the body remains under the dominion of death, redemption is not complete and the final heaven is not yet reached. No saint gets his full glory until he gets his crown and enters upon eternal priesthood and kinghood; but the Scriptures are clear that these crowns are not given until the coming again of Christ. Hence the final heaven of the saints lies beyond the day of judgment. Nor is there any proof in Scripture that saints redeemed from the earth shall have their final abode in "the third heaven." The New Jerusalem which they are to inhabit comes down from God out of heaven, and takes its place in much closer connection with our earth, then to be renewed. Hence, Paradise, or the happy world in which the disembodied people of God are awaiting their resurrections and their crowns, is not their final heaven, any more than the third heaven is to be their final abode. Christ is now locally in the third heaven, at the right hand of eternal Majesty; but He is to leave His present position there, and thence come forth again to our earth to

distribute His rewards and instate His people in the fulness of their glory. We read of His return to this world the same as He went up from it, but we never read of His going back again to where He now is. On the other hand, we are told that then the tabernacle of God shall be with men, that then He will *dwell among them*, and that then it shall be upon earth as it is in heaven. Neither Paradise nor the third heaven is, therefore, the final heaven of the saints. And only when Christ comes to execute judgment upon all, and by His invincible power sweeps away all that hinders the complete redemption of earth and man, shall the saints reach the full fruition of their everlasting blessedness or come to their final heaven.

As to what Paul saw and heard in "the third heaven," he does not tell us, except as what he says of Paradise may apply to it also. The implications are that great gulfs of space were instantaneously crossed as upon the wings of thought. The spiritual world takes no account of distances. Extension is a property of matter, not of spirit. In so far as any question of distance is concerned, it is the same as if the spiritual world were all around us, so that there is nothing required but the lifting of a latch or the opening of a door in order to find ourselves in the midst of any part of it. When Christ comes, those who are His are to be transferred from the earth to where He is in the clouds with all the suddenness of a flash of lightning, "in the twinkling of an eye." The instant a believing soul leaves the body it is in Paradise. There is local transfer,

doubtless, but it is like the motion of thought, and not such as takes cognizance of physical distance or extension. In a flash, in the time of a tick of the clock, Paul was in the third heaven, and the same with reference to Paradise.

If this was the "trance" to which he refers in Acts, then he saw Christ, and heard Him speak, and conversed with Him, and received from Him directions concerning his apostolic duties. Elsewhere he says, "*Have I not seen Christ?*" Perhaps he saw Christ in that marvellous vision on his way to Damascus, but he certainly saw Him on the occasion of his trance in the temple at Jerusalem; and that trance was most probably the ereption to the third heaven and to Paradise to which he here alludes. He does not say whether it was in the third heaven or in Paradise that he thus met and conversed with the Saviour. It may have been in either; for, while the Saviour is locally in the third heaven, He is also present to the spirits in Paradise, for the apostle elsewhere speaks of the decease of believers as a departing "to be with Christ," and rates absence from the body as equivalent to presence with the Lord. But in whichever of these realms it was, Paul saw and conversed with the Lord Jesus. That glorious Saviour was no longer to him a dim, faint object of mere thought, obscured by distance and by the mists of sense and of this world, but a living, personal reality. How that Lord appeared to him, how he felt on seeing and hearing Him, or what it was that most fixed his attention and impressed his soul as he there looked upon this God-man in glory, he

makes no attempt to describe. The fact alone he states, which was, however, a transcendent fact—a fact that must ever afterward have been present to his soul as one of its sublimest treasures, which put his faith within the sphere of certain knowledge, and with which we may also confirm and strengthen our confidence in the reality of all that the Scriptures tell us of Christ and heaven.

What more the apostle saw may be found reflected in what he elsewhere writes of "thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers," and of the blessed immunities of the saints, as in effect "come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the first-born which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant" (Heb. 12 : 22–24).

In the very nature of the case he must have gazed upon multitudes of immortals in the heavenly realms; mingled with souls under the altar; seen that those fallen asleep in Christ have not perished; observed the scenes and surroundings of their happy being; listened to their speech and accents; and walked on high with spirits once in the body.

Did he recognize any whom he knew on earth? We are not informed; but he knew Jesus, and others may not all have been unfamiliar to him.

Had he seen anything of the worship celebrated in the celestial spheres? Had he heard the "Holy, Holy, Holy" sung, or the chants of alleluia issu-

ing from blest voices uttering joy? We cannot tell. He elsewhere talks of 'the tongues of angels," and raptures, transports, ecstasies, and wondrous utterances must needs have come under his observation. He speaks of "visions and revelations of the Lord," but what visions and what revelations we can only infer from what shines through his writings in general. That they were transcendent is fully indicated when he tells us that he "heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man [or not within reach of human language or power] to utter."

What went beyond the descriptive powers of the apostle Paul must needs be very high and glorious. But everything was so much above all human ideas, so different from all the possibilities of human conception and speech, and so deep hidden from the understanding of men in the flesh, that no words of ours could speak it, no tongue of mortal utter it. He further speaks of "the abundance of the revelations" as so great that the hearing and the seeing of them were likely to exalt him beyond measure—to intoxicate him with the glory of his knowledge and heavenly experiences—and that he had to have a special thorn in his flesh to keep him from overweening pride in what he had seen and heard.

Favored apostle! Most gladly would he bear all these infirmities and afflictions to be the possessor of such grace. And how did these "visions and revelations" serve to fix his faith, steadfastness, and devotion for all his after-life! How they dwelt in his thoughts! How they intensified his heavenly desires! How they kindled his imagination and

gave inspiration to his addresses! How they comforted him in his great trials and conflicts and sustained him in his gigantic labors! What a littleness in his eyes did they stamp upon all the pleasures, possessions, and honors of this present world! What indifference to pain, privation, suffering, and death did they beget! Let come what would, he had demonstration of the Gospel he preached, and he would hold to it at all costs. And whether he lived to labor and suffer for Christ, or was compelled to give his head to the executioner for the sake of Christ, he counted it all gain; for he had had a look into the Beyond, and was willing to endure the loss of all things if he might but have place and portion in that blessed Paradise.

Dear friends, our Christianity is not fable. The things we hope and labor for are not empty dreams. There is a God and Father of all. There is a Christ who died for us, and, behold, He is alive for evermore. There is a heaven, a Paradise, a home-place for the good, a blessed rest for the people of God. Jesus has told of it, and bade us seek to enter in at the gate that leads to it. Paul was there and saw it, and came back to tell us of its reality and its unspeakable glory. He had personal vision of its treasures, its jewels, its glories, its wonderful language, its unutterable things; and so was he attracted and impressed that all the great energies of his great nature were ever afterward directed to the one point of attaining to those blessed scenes when once done with the turmoils of this mortal life. It was not dream, fancy, hallucination. He saw; he

heard; he got heavenly directions and commands; he met the beings who occupy those worlds and listened to their conversations; he had special bodily humiliations on account of these transcendent experiences, that he might not be exalted above measure for a man on earth; in the light and hope of those glories he lived, labored, and died; and the inference is conclusive, that, as surely as a wise, sober, self-possessed, and honest man, like Paul, knew what he was about, and neither deceived himself nor would deceive others, there is another and higher world, rolling with tides of light and glory and blessedness, to which it is our privilege to attain through Him who died for us and rose again.

We may not be too curious about the things of that other world. It is not well that we should know too much concerning them. Man may not utter them. Too much familiarity with heaven would unfit us for our proper duties here. It is enough that some have seen, and come back to assure us of the reality.

Our calling now is to walk by faith, and not by sight. Our proper life is to endure as seeing what is invisible. But, living on in humble faith and hope, trusting in Jesus, and trying to do our duty well, some of these days or nights this world of toil and tears shall fade from our sight, and in its place far other scenes shall open, while our enraptured spirits ask, "What place is this? What iris-glories in this sweet atmosphere! What wondrous palaces! What landscapes! What immortal trees! What crystal streams! What amaranthine bowers! What white-

robed choirs! What exultant music! What unspeakable words! What a sublime King, smiling benignant and stretching forth His hand of welcome to His joys! O the beatific vision! O the splendid revelations! Is this a dream?" To which a thousand blessed voices answer, "*This is Paradise—this is Paradise!*"

O Paradise! O Paradise!
Who doth not crave for rest?
Who would not seek the happy land
Where they that loved are blest—
Where loyal hearts and true
Stand ever in the light,
All rapture through and through,
In God's most holy sight?

O Paradise! O Paradise!
The world is growing old;
Who would not be at rest and free
Where love is never cold—
Where loyal hearts and true
Stand ever in the light,
All rapture through and through,
In God's most holy sight?

Quinquagesima Sunday.

1 Cor. 13: 1–13: Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not, charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things, for now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

BOTH as to subject and treatment this chapter stands alone among Paul's numerous writings. It is notably distinguished from all that precedes and all that follows. On either side of it we find tumult of argument and re-

monstrance, but here all is calm and heavenly. The sentences move like rhythmical melody, the imagery unfolds itself in a manner almost dramatic, and the language rolls in kindling and effective rhetoric. We can imagine the apostle's amanuensis stopping to look up into his face as he strikes this chapter, and that face radiant like the face of an angel. With a force irresistible this particular part of Scripture has recommended itself to all classes of readers. Whatever doubts men have had concerning Christ and the Gospel, there is no one who has ever ventured objection to the religion taught in this chapter. Wesley tells of a Jewish physician who used to say with great earnestness that no writer ever produced a finer passage than this, and that he wished it were written in gold and carried and read by every Jew by day and by night. He saw in it the cream and perfection of all religion. Let us, then, turn aside for a few moments from all other things, and endeavor to grasp and apply the grand contents of this golden chapter.

I. Let us inquire a little into the nature and source of the particular goodness of which we here have the earliest and fullest detailed description. Our version calls it *charity*, but it is something more than is signified in the common acceptation of that word. Almsgiving and care and provision for the poor, sick, and suffering are what we usually think of in connection with our idea of *charity;* but the apostle tells us that we may give all our goods for such purposes, and still not have the charity of which he speaks.

The original Greek word (ἀγάπη) by which he designates it is entirely unknown to the heathen classics. It answers best to our English word *love*, particularly as founded on religious feelings and convictions. The oldest English translations accordingly render it *love*. So it stands in Tyndale's versions of 1526 and 1534, in the Cranmer Bible of 1539, in the Geneva version of 1557, and in the German of Luther. It is more than philanthropy, more than friendship, more than all natural beneficent affection. "It is not religion evaporated into benevolence, but benevolence taken up into religion. It is the practical exemplification of the two great characteristics of Christianity—the union of the divine with the human, of religion with morality; love to man for the sake of love to God, and love to God showing itself in love to man."

It is one of the common doctrines of our holy religion that true faith is an active principle. To appreciate and believe in Jesus Christ necessarily moves to corresponding fruits. We cannot be one with Christ without loving what He loves and sharing in the exemplification of the same temper and benevolent endeavor which characterized Him. And this taking in of the mind and spirit of Christ, and making it living in ourselves by true faith, is the *charity* which the apostle here commends. Faith worketh by love. It embodies itself in a high and active religio-philanthropic benevolence. And that benevolence is the *charity* under consideration. It is the goodness of God in the soul, tempering its whole nature and manifesting itself in the entire life, par-

ticularly with regard to our relations to our fellow-men.

II. It is therefore, also, a most vital and important Christian grace. The apostle eulogizes it as far above all other gifts. He mentions the gift of tongues—a mysterious and wonderful elevation experienced by many of the first Christians, which lifted them not only above others, but quite above themselves, enabling them to make themselves understood to those of whose language they were ignorant, and to urge home the truth upon their hearers with almost irresistible power. It was by the presence and aid of this extraordinary gift that the apostles on the day of Pentecost were enabled to reach and impress so many people, and gave the first great impulse to the religion of the New Testament. It lingered long with the early Church, and, though often over-estimated in its commoner forms, was regarded with much interest. But, though a man should be able to make himself understood in every human language, and could add to this the power to handle angelic speech, the apostle says he would be nothing more than sounding brass and a clanging cymbal if destitute of *charity*.

He mentions the gift of prophecy—a supernatural power to foresee and foretell future events, and to fore-announce things to come which no ordinary foresight could anticipate. This was a still higher gift than that of tongues, more highly esteemed, and of more real value in the edification of the Church. But in all its fulness the apostle pronounces it nothing without *charity*.

He mentions the gift of knowledge and understanding—the power of penetrating and comprehending recondite things and mastering the most hidden truths—a gift still higher in the scale than tongues or prophecy. But even the mastery of all mystery is of no avail without *charity*.

He mentions the gift of faith—a power to influence the laws of nature and to control the forces which govern in things. But, though potent enough to remove mountains at command, he would not allow it to be anything placed against *charity*.

He mentions almsgiving and the appropriation of all one's possessions to the poor; but he pronounces the most self-denying beneficence of this sort profitless without *charity*. Nay, though a man should have a martyr's heroism and give his body to the stake in attestation of his devotion to the faith, if he has not *charity* he is still in the depths of spiritual destitution and beggary.

He thus sets up this grace of charity far above the greatest gifts ever attained on earth, and as sublimely overtopping the highest of all graces possessed by man.

III. In vindication of this exalted estimate the apostle instances the properties and fruits of this grace.

Charity is forbearing. It suffereth long. It is the opposite of a hasty spirit or a temper which is ever breaking out in sudden and rash anger, seeking revenge for every little wrong and ever ready to render evil for evil. It is a spirit of patient self-restraint under affronts, reproaches, and injuries. It is a spirit

which does not take fire at every spark, which is not inflamed at every little trespass, but which beareth with the frailties, follies, and offences of men, and cautiously keeps back from all hasty and rash resentments.

Charity is kind. It not only keeps back from quick and fierce retaliation, but is ready to do all possible good even to enemies. It is a benignant spirit, which pities men's infirmities and is moved at their necessities and sufferings. A hungering and thirsting foe as well as a needy friend may always count on its sympathy and kindly aid. It never sees a poor traveller whom the thieves have beaten, stript, and wounded without going to him, pouring oil into his wounds, helping to a place of shelter, and giving him the benefit of its merciful regard.

"Charity envieth not." It is not galled and grieved and fretted at another's prosperity. There are some who cannot bear the preferment or superiority of others. If any one is more favored and successful than they, they grow uneasy, complaining, jealous, and resentful. But charity is not thus evil and envious. Content with such things as it has, it indulges no ugly feelings toward those more fortunate than itself. Envy has no place in a heart that has charity.

"Charity vaunteth not herself, is not puffed up, doth not behave herself unseemly." It is the natural disposition of man to love pre-eminence and to make a show of the distinctions of which he deems himself possessed. We are all proud beings, and are apt to wish people to know how rich, how clever, how devout, how wise, how eloquent, how mighty,

how worthy of consideration we are. The follies of men on this point furnish an endless subject for laughter and satire. But there is nothing of this pride, vain-glory, and unseemly ostentation in charity. It is a meek and humble spirit, which gives its alms without sounding a trumpet before it, which prays without inviting upon it the observation of men, which fasts without disfiguring its countenance, and which behaves itself according to its place, with no wish to have credit and applause to which it is not entitled or to parade for admiration any advantages which it may possess. It is a spirit of humility and becoming propriety.

Charity seeketh not her own. It is an unselfish spirit, not given to the pursuit of personal interests at the expense of the rights of others, but considerate of other people as well as itself. There are many who care only for themselves. If they are accommodated and can have their desires gratified, and are successful and comfortable, it is no matter how others may fare or who is hurt or set back or oppressed by their unhallowed selfishness. If they only are in ease, plenty, and honor, that is all they are after, and no matter for the means employed to secure their ends. But this is not charity, and never can coexist with charity, for charity does not confine its favors and consideration to itself, but looks beyond to the good of others, and seeks to serve all men as it would serve itself. It is the exact opposite of that grasping and selfish disposition which is ever scrambling for its own gratification in disregard of others' rights and dues and comforts.

Charity *οὐ παροξύνεται*—is not excited to paroxysms of fury and extravagant anger. It does not give up to rage and impatience beyond all bounds of reason and religion. It is as lawful to be angry as it is to be pleased. Indeed, true charity must needs be displeased, indignant, and wroth with evil and wrong. This same apostle elsewhere speaks of being angry and yet not sinning. The Saviour Himself is spoken of as looking upon the perverseness of some of His hearers with anger, being grieved at the hardness of their hearts. But anger, to be charitable, must not rise too high nor hold too long nor be too severe. The blood must not boil up or break out into passionate fury, and the sun must not go down upon nursed wrath; for that would be to give place to the devil, to surrender our reason, and to allow the brute to override the man. And while charity is not without its displeasure and indignation, it knows nothing of fits of fury and raging passion.

Charity thinketh not evil—*οὐ λογίζεται*—literally, does not reckon up the injuries it has received with a view to have satisfaction for them—and hence does not harbor ill designs toward others or contrive mischief or trouble against them. It thinketh no evil, in the sense that it is not evil-minded toward any one, does not wish harm to a neighbor, or study to bring him down, blast his credit, or hinder his peace.

Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth. It is displeased and pained with all manner of wrong. It is sorrwful over every instance of weakness, unworthiness, or moral failure, whether in

a friend or an enemy. But it is always joyful in the success of goodness and truth. Wickedness is an abomination to it, and justice and right are its particular delight.

Charity beareth all things. It is proof against all hard usage, and cannot be turned from its way by oppositions, reproaches, and wrongs. With its soul filled with good purposes, and laboring only in the interests of those good purposes, it is patiently steadfast, ready to suffer all things rather than to forego its calling or to surrender because ill-treated. As a ship or roof which does not leak, and thus serves its purpose effectually, or as steady troops which stand to their duty amidst the galling fire of the enemy, and thus keep the city from being taken, so charity stands out against everything that would turn it from fidelity to its duty. It is a spirit of constancy in goodness which nothing can turn, nothing vanquish, nothing crush.

Charity believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. It is confiding, it is hopeful; and it is never weary in its good endeavors, however perplexed, opposed, misjudged, or unappreciated.

IV. But the crowning glory of this grace is its imperishable durability. "*Charity never faileth.*" In this respect it contrasts strongly with other great and honored Christian graces.

Prophecy is a great divine gift; but whether there be prophecies, they shall vanish away. They belong to a period of darkness in sacred things, and the time is coming when there shall be no more dark-

ness—no more occasion for one to say to his neighbor, Know thou the Lord, for all shall know Him from the least to the greatest. Prophecy will be no more needed then.

To speak with tongues and to be able to communicate in many languages is a great gift; but "whether there be tongues, they shall cease." The time is coming when diversities of language shall end. Sin brought them upon the world, and redemption will again remove them. All are to be of one language and one speech in the happy world to come. Then, in literal reality, there will be neither Greek nor Jew, Barbarian nor Scythian, and the use of divers tongues shall have a perpetual end. This gift will then be no longer wanted.

Knowledge is a great gift. The world can never get done with its laudations of science and learning. But all that is now called knowledge is so fragmentary and imperfect that it must in time become superannuated and pass away like the ideas of childhood. Even the knowledge we have from Revelation itself is so partial, and the glimpses of truth afforded us are so fractional, that there is very much which doth not yet appear. And when once the people of God are let into the blessed arcana of perfect wisdom, all present knowledge will no more be accounted knowledge, because of the greater and fuller light which then will dawn. Now we see through a glass only half transparent, but the time is coming when we shall look on truth unveiled, with no obscuring medium between it and us. Now we know only in part, but then we shall know even as we are known.

And the knowledge of this present time, which is only as the thinking and understanding of untutored children and babes, when that full manhood comes will be put aside as no longer to be accounted knowledge. "It shall vanish away," because there will be no more use for the poor wisdom we now possess.

But not so with charity. This never faileth. It will be the same in heaven as upon earth—the characteristic of the saints in glory as it is of the saints in the flesh. It cannot become superannuated, and it cannot be supplanted by anything more perfect. It is the very essence and fulfilling of the law, which is the same in all time and all space. It is eternal. It abides with God's children here, and will go along with them hereafter. It will accompany them into heaven, and make up much of their fitness for, as their felicity in, heaven.

Amid the varying changes and fluctuations of dispensations and times there are three things which never change, but remain the same under all. They constitute the sublime trinity of graces for man which abide through all earthly revolutions and vicissitudes. And so long as this present world lasts, wherever true religion lives, they must live. They are the vital constituents of all availing piety. They are the essential qualities on which alone a man can rise to the glories of the higher world. They are FAITH, HOPE, CHARITY, these three. No changes of dispensation or lapse of time can alter their nature or necessity. They are the very life and soul of our holy religion—the three-linked chain binding to God and immortality. But of these three supereminent

graces CHARITY is the divinest and supreme. The time is coming when Faith will give place to sight, and Hope vanish in fruition; but Charity must live on, and shine with undiminished lustre when the office of its sister graces has been fulfilled, their end achieved, and their very being changed. It is the fruit, the goal, the consummation of all other gifts. We are saved by Faith and Hope, but the very life and power of that salvation is CHARITY.

How important, therefore, and how indispensable, that we should covet, cherish, cultivate, and exemplify this grace of CHARITY! We can afford to do without many things, but we cannot afford to be without charity. We may have many other great and shining gifts and qualities, but none of them can avail without charity.

Speaking with the tongues of men and angels is nothing without this. Wesley tells of a young man who for years never endeavored to convince any one of a religious truth but he was convinced, or to persuade any one to engage in a religious life but he was persuaded. Yet, all that power of convincing speech and force of persuasion without lowliness and meekness and patient love can no more qualify for the fruition of God than a clear voice or a fine complexion.

Prophetic inspiration is nothing without charity. Balaam had this, and yet miserably perished with the enemies of Israel. The greatest knowledge of the Bible and penetration into its holy mysteries are unavailing without charity. When Ahithophel spoke, it was as if God Himself had spoken, and yet he

died a death as hopeless and melancholy as that of Judas Iscariot.

Nay, not even faith, though able to remove mountains, nor almsgiving, though it distribute to the poor everything one has, nor martyrdom nor readiness to die for the truth of God, can be of any good avail if the spirit of love be not dwelling in the heart. Therefore saith the inspired apostle, "Above all things, have fervent charity among yourselves" (1 Pet. 4 8); "He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love." God is not Faith, God is not Hope, but God is Love. "And he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him" (1 John 4 : 8, 16). Hence the Word,

Had I the tongues of Greeks and Jews,
And nobler speech than angels use,
If love be absent I am found,
Like tinkling brass, an empty sound.

Were I inspired to preach and tell
All that is done in heaven and hell,
Or could my faith the world remove,
Still I am nothing without love.

Should I distribute all my store
To feed the hungry, clothe the poor,
Or give my body to the flame
To gain a martyr's glorious name,

If love to God and love to men
Be absent, all my hopes are vain;
Nor tongues, nor gifts, nor fiery zeal,
The work of love can e'er fulfil.

Ash Wednesday.

JOEL 2: 12–19: Therefore also now, saith the Lord, Turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning:

And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.

Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him; even a meat-offering and a drink-offering unto the Lord your God?

Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly:

Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet.

Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?

Then will the Lord be jealous for his land, and pity his people.

Yea, the Lord will answer and say unto his people, Behold, I will send you corn, and wine, and oil, and ye shall be satisfied therewith: and I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen.

BECAUSE the great penitential season of the Church Year which we call *Lent* has no specific authority in divine appointment we are not therefore to conclude that it has no claims upon our regard. The early Christian fathers had respect to it, and Theodore has rightly said that it is well for us all to follow their example—not as a

legal exaction, indeed, but in the exercise of our Christian freedom and in the true evangelic spirit. Tertullian and Irenæus refer to it as observed in their day, and the latter assigns it a much earlier date—as far back as the times of the apostles themselves. The number of days embraced was not then clearly fixed, but the facts that our Saviour spent forty days in fasting and prayer before entering upon His ministry, and that Moses and Elijah both went through the same number of days in a similar abstinence, suggested forty days as the time for this great penitential season; and so the forty days preceding the festival of Easter were designated for it. The object contemplated was the bringing of the people into deeper sympathy with the Lord Jesus, especially in His great sufferings on our behalf, the quickening of Christian faith and zeal, and preparation for admission to the sacraments as connected with the Easter-time.

In the Epistle Lesson for this first day of Lent we have the keynote to the entire solemnity. It is a message from God Himself, which we may well accept as *The Voice of Lent*, and which we cannot err in taking earnestly and practically to heart at all times, and especially at this time. Three things are here presented for our consideration:

I. That Judgments Impend;
II. That God would Defend;
III. That Sinners must Amend.

And may God, with whom we have to do in all

these momentous things, help us to take in the truth, and so to profit by it that we may not fail of His merciful deliverance!

I. Judgments Impend.

At the time the text was first delivered God said, "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand; a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the dusk spread upon the mountains. . . . The earth shall quake; the heavens shall tremble; the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining: for the day of the Lord is great and very terrible."

To whatever impending calamities this proclamation then immediately referred, it plainly contemplated much more. The fact that the prophet emphatically calls what he describes "*The Day of the Lord*" certainly implies some connection with the great judgment-period yet to come. To many who then lived the impending calamity was virtually the same as the Great Day, as it would cut them off for ever from all hope; but we know from Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost that these prophecies of Joel extended down to the beginning of our era, and hence also, in the nature of the case, to that momentous period when "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance upon them that know not God and that obey not the Gospel" (2 Thess. 1:

7–9). It also belongs to the nature of sacred prophecies in general to have germinant and springing accomplishments in near events as first-fruits of the great harvest of the same kind. The judgments executed upon Egypt at the birth of the Hebrew nation, on ancient Israel for their rebellion and idolatries, on Babylon by the Medes and Persians, on the Jews in consequence of their rejection of the Christ, and other marked visitations on cities, peoples, and nations, really were anticipative fractions, preinstalments and earnests, of the great universal Doomsday. And so in the case before us. The calamity then about to befall Israel was simply the forerunner and forepledge of the great and terrible Day of the Lord which is still to come.

The world has long been hearing of a Day of Doom. Ever since wickedness first began to reign over mankind God's holy prophets have been pointing to such a day, and calling on the children of men to make ready for it. Again and again, in every age, has Jehovah been dealing out foretastes and prelibations of it which have shaken the world and filled it with desolations upon desolations. Enoch and Noah foretold it, and one great instalment of it speedily came sweeping all flesh save eight persons to a watery grave. Moses prophesied of a time when Jehovah will whet His glittering sword and His hand lay hold on judgment to render vengeance to His enemies and to make His arrows drunk with blood (Deut. 32 : 40–43). Again and again has the Psalmist told of a coming day when all the rebellious powers of the earth shall be broken

with a rod of iron and dashed to pieces like a vessel of pottery. Isaiah has over and over referred to a period when God will punish the world for its evil and the wicked for their iniquity, and cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.

And if any are disposed to take all this as nothing but Old-Testament poetry, we find the same set forth in equal terribleness in plain New-Testament prose. There is not an apostolic writer who does not tell us that the Lord shall come with myriads of His holy ones to execute judgment upon all. Jesus Himself repeatedly tells of a day of judgment in which men shall be brought to final account for every ill passion and every idle word. Peter avers that the heavens and the earth which are now are reserved unto fire for the day of judgment and the destruction of the ungodly. John tells of a time of judicial disaster and calamity involving the whole economy of terrestrial things, when men shall seek to hide in dens and rocks of the mountains, and cry to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of His wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?"

And that day is to be contemplated now as "*nigh at hand.*" When the apostles yet lived the time had come "for judgment to begin," as it did begin in the horrible scenes and desolations which befell the Jewish state and metropolis, and its fulness cannot now be very far off. As far as we have any intimations of dates, they are all about run out. As far as can

be ascertained, there is nothing in sacred prophecy remaining to be fulfilled ere that day comes. The predicted signs of its nearness are clearly traceable in the aspects of society and nature, and they are intensifying with every new turn and development. Everywhere we find uneasiness in the body of the earth, strange disturbances in the sea, singularities in the seasons, marked violence in the motions of the elements, unusual presentations in the conditions and relations of the heavenly orbs, perplexing and ominous phenomena in the appearances of the sky, society in perturbed and ugly fermentation, troubles and distresses of nations with perplexity, discontent and rankling animosities of classes, dark and bloody conclaves and combinations setting law at defiance and disregarding and overturning the old landmarks and stabilities of the social fabric, devilish passions plotting in secret and breaking out in all sorts of wicked disorder and destruction to life and property, scandalous corruptions in public and private virtue, an unprecedented spread of unbelief, decay of faith, and stark infidelity infesting the popular mind, depleting our sanctuaries, creeping into our schools and colleges, lurking in the hearts of half the professed Church, and cropping out even in the very pulpits. Every one can see for himself the enthronement of selfishness, the growth of lawlessness, the increase of crime, the casting away of moral obligations, and the potent workings everywhere of a spirit that bodes nothing but disaster and anarchy, plainly showing that the world to-day is on the border-line of that dread time when God shall let His judgment-

thunders loose. Who can deny that the nations at this hour are treading on a volcano that smokes beneath their feet, threatening at any moment to burst out in engulfing fires?

And if the fulness of the great and terrible day should be farther off than these symptoms would seem to indicate, they nevertheless tell of the close proximity of much that belongs to that day, and of what will be the same as that day to myriads of our race. The truth is that, in measure, the Great Day of Doom is always here. There is not a day or hour in which it is not felt and doing its work somewhere. The final doom of multitudes is being settled with every striking of the clock. He that believeth not is judged and condemned already. We stand in jeopardy every hour, and every hour is hurrying multitudes to their last account, their harvest past, their summer ended. Plague, accident, disease, and death—all fruits of sin—are ever near to cut short the day of life and land us before the tribunal of eternal retribution. There is not a godless man or woman walking on this earth that may not be in hell before another week. And the very thoughts and sentiments that rise in your hearts while I speak these solemn sentences may be settling *your* eternal destiny.

Ah, yes. Let men call us croakers and pessimists, and turn a deaf ear to what the Scriptures tell us; it is the truth—and God will Himself soon verify it to all unbelievers—that terrible judgments are at hand and now hang in lowering blackness over all this present world. But,

II. God would Defend.

From His alarming denunciations of sin, and the terrible wrath proclaimed against the wicked and unbelieving, we might think Him very severe, unfeeling, rigorous, and tyrannical. But it is not so. Nothing could be more unjust to God or fatal to ourselves than to give place to such a thought. Though "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," and nothing remains for impenitent sinners but "a certain fearful looking for judgment and fiery indignation," there is not a more loving or lovable Being in the universe than God. The inmost principle of His nature is Love itself, the spring and fountain of all love and all that is lovely. And in this very text, in connection with the most terrific announcements of His wrath upon the guilty and incorrigible, the clear and pointed declaration is that "*He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness;*" yea, that if men will only give heed to His warnings, seek His grace, and conform to His Word, He will hear their prayers, send them corn and wine and oil in plenty, and be their everlasting Deliverer.

To the very people whom He here threatens to judge so terribly for their idolatries and sins He calls out in sorrowful lamentation, "O Ephraim! what shall I do unto thee? O Judah! what shall I do unto thee?" "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim?" (Hosea 6:4; 11:8). His challenge is to

all the world to show, if it can, what more in consistency with the nature of things He could do to make men happy, to save them out of their sins, and to bring them to eternal life that He has not done already. He has given us full capacities and opportunities to be saved if we be so minded. He can make no greater sacrifice for us than He has made in the gift of His only-begotten Son to be the propitiation for our sins. He has made the conditions as low, easy, and reasonable as they can be made. He has provided as good and efficient helps as can by any means be furnished. He has made His proposals and invitations as comprehensive, urgent, and pathetic as He can make them. He has given as strong proofs of His sincerity and earnestness in the matter as can be given. He has propounded the highest motives that the universe can afford. And He waits and bears with men as long as the nature of the case, the demands of justice, and their own best interests will allow. Nay, more: because He could swear by no greater, He hath sworn by Himself, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live" (Ezek. 33 : 11). And His severest threatenings are themselves in the interest of the recovery of the guilty from their sins, that they may not be consumed.

With all the depravities that are upon our race, and all the wickedness and unbelief which have rendered our world a scandal to creation, there still are some whom no judgment-plagues or judgment-day can ever harm. In every generation God has His

witnesses whom He hath engraven on the palms of His hands, and concerning whom He hath said, "They shall not be ashamed in the evil time, and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied" (Ps. 37 : 19). Harvests may fail, business disappoint, earthly good take wings, sorrowful destitution afflict, sickness come, bereaving pestilence attack, and cups of bitterness be presented to be drunk; but they still have comforts and treasures in heaven. God's eye is on them for good, and a wise and mighty administration reigns to turn even their adversities to jewels, and to bring forth their righteousness as the light and their judgment as the noonday. If death strike or the trump of judgment sound, with it comes happy release from the sorrows and disabilities of earth and all the quicker instatement into the peace and blessedness of heaven. Happen what may, they are secure in the preserving care and salvation of God. And of that favored company would He have us all to be. To this end He has raised up His prophets, given His Son, vouchsafed His Spirit, and sent us the solemn call which addresses us again to-day. He would indeed help and defend every one of us, and save us for ever, if we will but hear and obey His Word. But,

III. Sinners must Amend.

Lenten-time is a repenting-time. The Word is, "Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, let the ministers of the Lord weep between the porch

and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach." All classes and ages need stirring up. Every soul requires to be shaken and aroused. From the highest to the lowest, from the greatest to the smallest, from the holiest to the wickedest, there comes the summons to a deeper concern and a profounder activity to be secure against the great and terrible Day of the Lord.

1. *Evil ways must be given up.* Sin is the fuel of judgment. This feeds the fires of wrath and inflames it with its terribleness. Omnipotence has yoked sin and punishment together, and no power can ever divorce them. If people are not willing to relinquish, hate, and abhor sin, they must take the fires of judgment with it. *Turn or burn* is the one only alternative. To cry, "God, mercy!" with no mind or heart to alter the life—to gather into the sanctuary without withdrawing the soul from its idolatry of self and this world—to shut the mouth against pleasant food while there is no effectual renunciation of the devil and his works—to put on sackcloth and lie in ashes with no willing and abiding subjugation of the life to the love and service of God,—will not answer. The fast which the Lord has chosen is to break the bands of wickedness, to cease to do evil and learn to do well.

Has any one been living without God and without hope in the world? That sort of life must be done away at once and for ever. Has any one been neglecting prayer, the Bible, the sanctuary, the sacraments, or any of the known duties of a child of

God? That negligence must cease, and a new style of dealing in the matter take its place. Has any one been living in unfaith, yielding to the power of lust and appetite, worshipping at the shrine of Mammon and vanity; living in malice, envy, hatred, and uncharity; doing a dishonest business; lying, deceiving, cheating, using profanity, or treading in crooked paths contrary to conscience, the laws of God, and better knowledge? The requirement is absolute that a radical and permanent change be made or there can be no salvation. Has any one been feeling the supreme importance of attending to the wants of the soul and the things of God and eternity, but never come to the point of doing it? That indecision must be ended, the ordinances of Christ submitted to, and the soul set to seek divine acceptance in the way of the divine appointments. Has any one taken the vows of discipleship, and yet been practically repudiating them, neglecting duty, consorting with the wicked, and feeling more at home in the society of those who know not God than in the fellowship of believers and the following up of Christian obligations? This sort of thing must be remedied, this backsliding repaired, and the first works done over again. And, whatever the case may be, every known aberration from righteousness and every conscious infidelity to the Word and appointments of Jesus must be left off and abandoned, or safety is out of the question.

2. And in order to this there must come *a sobering up to earnest attention to sacred things.* I do not say cease to eat meat. I do not say starve your bodies

for forty days. I do not say "*fast*," in the outward ceremonial sense of that word, although there be certain kinds of ill obsessions which go not out without rigid abstinence and prayer. But I do say, *Let there be inward fasting*. Let there be a sobering of the soul from its eagerness in worldliness and worldly pursuits, enjoyments, and vanities. Supplant your gayeties with thoughts of how you stand with God, on what you are building your hopes for eternity, how it will be with you when your earthly life is over, how soon you will have done with all these passing scenes, what God has done for you, and how little you have concerned yourself to do for Him. Take time from your social enjoyments, from your occupation with fashionable life and giddy things, from your business if necessary, and from everything that may be in your way, that you may think seriously upon your past, what sort of record you have been making for the great day that cometh, what you have profited by your opportunities, how your account stands with your Almighty Maker and Judge, and what preparation you have been maturing for that eternity in which we must all presently be. Let there be prayerful and searching self-examination, that deficiencies may be detected and amended, wrongs righted, infidelities healed, and the heart brought into true accord and fellowship with God. And if you think fasting and bodily abstinence can help you in this, then fast and abstain; only do not suppose that your soul is safe because you stint your bodily allowances. *Spirituality*, soul-exercise in its relations to God, is the great matter; and yet bodily

fasting—at least a decided suspension in the ongoing of gayety, carnal indulgence, social dissipations, and engrossments with worldly things—may be a valuable accessory in coming to a right heart and devotion. Something of the kind naturally, if not necessarily, goes along with genuine repentance and the setting of ourselves to a hearty Godwardness of endeavor, and hence is not only in place, but of very great importance. Without it the fear is that we are not in real earnest. When God's thunders are rolling over a house it is time for the inmates to silence their hilarity, stop their plays and quarrels, and compose themselves to thought and quiet. And if our religious seriousness be not strong enough to make some impression upon the outward manner of handling and indulging ourselves, the chances are that it is equally unavailing for the soul.

3. But the great and all-essential requirement is, that *the heart be moved to earnest and honest penitential return to God.* On this point the text is particularly clear and emphatic: "Now, saith the Lord, *Turn ye even to Me with all your heart: rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God; for He is gracious and mereiful.*"

We have not to buy so much grace by so much penance or so much bodily sacrifice and mortification. Our help is in the free amnesty of the heavenly Father, offered and bestowed through Jesus Christ. It is the blood of Jesus that cancels the penalty of sin, and not our fastings, macerations, lamentations, and payments. From all our sins and shortcomings God is willing and ready to justify us

freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. There is but one way of salvation for guilty man, and that is through the Saviour's cross. To build on anything else is to build for certain destruction. There is no hope but in the mercy of Jesus. In Him alone is reconciliation or forgiveness. And He offers it without money and without price. But, still, there must be a disposing of the heart to receive it—a seeking of the burdened soul to its only Deliverer—the letting go of other things for honest endeavor to come into communion and fellowship with God's goodness and renewing Spirit.

Regret and sorrowful compunction for having slighted so loving a Lord and Saviour, and an earnest struggle of soul to be free from everything displeasing to so good a God, are the things that most of all are to enlist and engage us. Our hearts are not savingly rent until we come to feel the sinfulness of sin and humble ourselves before God on account of it, and cry to Him for mercy. That is the true child-spirit which sorrows for its disobedience, mourns its waywardness and wrong-doing, and is lovingly and sincerely anxious for reinstatement in the good Father's affectionate favor. And such a spirit God engages to receive and bless.

Thus, then, as judgments impend, and God would defend, we poor sinners are called on to amend.

And shall the lesson be without its fruits? Certainly, dear friends, we all need it. Who of us can claim to have come to "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ"? Who of us but is com-

pelled in honesty to say with Jeremiah, "O Lord, our backslidings are many; we have sinned against Thee"? We have had great light and great opportunities, but how poorly have we improved our privileges! We profess to be the followers of Jesus, but at how great a distance has our following of Him been! How feeble is our faith! How lukewarm is our devotion! How languid is our love! How can we suppose that this is all we need to prepare us for the great day that is before us? Should we be suddenly called away, just as we are, is there no ground for misgivings respecting our future? Are we indeed ready for our last account? Alas for our leanness! Ay, our leanness!

But still there is hope. We have a gracious and merciful Father in heaven to whom we can come, who also is ready to heal our backslidings, help our infirmities, and crown us with His blessing. But He requires of us to turn to Him with all our hearts, sober ourselves to earnestness in spiritual things, renew our allegiance to our Saviour, and, with sorrow for our past failures and defects, set ourselves to a better and more devoted life. And to this may the good Lord graciously incline and help every one of us!

First Sunday in Lent.

2 Cor. 6: 1–10: We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.

(For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succored thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)

Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed:

But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses,

In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings;

By pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned,

By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,

By honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true;

As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed;

As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing, as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

A GREAT and persistent controversy has long been going on in our world, and one which ought to be settled. Mischiefs unspeakable have resulted from it, and must ever result as long as it is kept up. And, as in most strifes, the party most to blame is the hardest to be won and brought to a proper temper. I need hardly say what that controversy is or who are the parties

to it. It began in Eden, when 'Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden; and the Lord God called unto Adam and said unto him, Where art thou?" Then it was that the man began to apologize and equivocate, saying, "I was afraid, because I was naked." Questioned as to how he knew he was naked, and charged with having eaten of the forbidden tree, he cast the blame upon his wife, and through her upon his Maker, saying, "The *woman* whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave unto me of the tree, and I did eat." He not only sought to lodge the responsibility on the woman, but on God Himself as having placed this tempter in his way. And from that time the controversy has been going on. God cannot but be displeased with the depravities and sins of men, and so men have ever been full of dread and spite and enmity toward Him.

Now, it is of the greatest importance that this controversy should be amicably adjusted. The perpetuation of it can bring nothing but evil. To God, indeed, it can do no damage. Neither His being nor His throne is in any danger from aught that His creatures can do. In spite of everything, His glory must endure and His kingdom stand. But for men to persist in a fight with the eternal Sovereign of heaven and earth must necessarily result in their everlasting discomfiture. Hence, to them at least, the ending of the quarrel is of the utmost consequence. Of this the apostle was deeply sensible, and so not only sought to be himself on terms with God, but gave his unceasing efforts to bring others

to the same mind and spirit. A very urgent appeal to this end is contained in the text which now comes before us.

To enter into all the depths of the massive presentation would exceed the limits of this discourse. But something of its drift and substance may be indicated—sufficient, it is to be hoped, to make some decided impression upon our judgment and feelings, and to be of weight in inclining alienated hearts to throw down the arms of their rebellion and be reconciled to that good and almighty Being with whom they have been so long and wrongfully at outs. And to this end may the illuminating and converting power of the Holy Ghost attend and bless our efforts!

The text is a continuation of a grand strain of address begun in the preceding chapter. To grasp its full sweep and force we must therefore have respect to the context also. Taking the whole discourse together, as it was originally written, without break, we find in it sundry points demanding the most serious consideration.

I. That a Great Demonstration of Divine Love has been Made to Cure this Feud.

The apostle speaks of a scheme of reconciliation devised in heaven. A divine Messenger from the throne had come into the world proclaiming peace and good-will toward men, and charged at the same time with the work of removing out of the way all hindrances to the restoration of complete and lasting amity. He had come with commission not only to

declare and show the love of God for His rebellious subjects on the earth, but to take their place under the law, compensate for their iniquities, substitute His merit for their demerit, die that they might not die eternally, and rise again and reign for ever as an almighty Lord and Saviour to them, able to save unto the uttermost; in whom also God was engaged in "reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." It had even become a matter of accomplished fact that God had "made Him to be sin for us—*Him* who knew no sin—that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." The cross had been erected on Calvary, and the divine Victim had voluntarily died upon it—died as the propitiation for the sins of the whole world. The grave which sovereign justice had closed and sealed upon Him as surety for defaulting man had been unbarred and its Prisoner freed, in proof that the whole debt was paid and the whole *corpus* of human guilt atoned for to the last jot. The Seed of the woman, long promised to bruise the Serpent's head, had triumphed over the powers of death and hell and risen to glorious dominion as an omnipotent and eternal Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins to all nations, and to bring to honor, glory, and blessed immortality every member of the race ready to leave off enmity with God, accept amnesty, and enlist under the banner of the new kingdom of peace and salvation which He had set up.

Every ground of complaint against the great Father in heaven was thus swept away. The divine

goodness and love, beyond all power of man to have conceived, stood revealed in actual demonstration. Every barrier to free access to Jehovah's clemency and richest favor was completely done away. A throne of grace, to which every guilty and needy mortal could come with boldness, obtain mercy, and find grace to help in every time of need, had now been established. The very doors of heaven itself had been thrown open, and a new and living way consecrated through the rent veil of the Saviour's flesh, by which every one now had "liberty to enter into the holiest."

A great turning-point in the history of our race had really come, changing the whole aspect of things in the relations and opportunities of man, and leaving him utterly without excuse for any further hard feelings toward his Maker. What man had not at all sought, and could not at all think or expect, was voluntarily, out of free and unmerited love, vouchsafed and accomplished, that enmity might be slain and that sinners might be reconciled to their rightful Sovereign. Whatever the faultiness or guilt of men, and however unreasonable, devilish, long-continued, and outbreaking their rebellion, it was now arranged that no further account should ever be taken of it, and that no item of it should evermore be mentioned against such of them as would but accept the offered amnesty, give rightful credit to their merciful God, and take their proper places as His willing and loving subjects.

Such an exhibit of love had never before been seen. It was an astonishment to all the holy uni-

verse. And it laid such hold on the heart of Paul that it absorbed his whole being, and made it the master-passion of his life to do and suffer in loving and grateful return for such an unspeakable benefaction. If any wondered that he was so earnest in his zeal, so self-denying, so laborious, so untiring amid all the adversities into which his devotion brought him, his answer was that the love of Christ constrained him. It acted like a fire in his bones, thrilled him on through every hardship and every peril, and held him bound as with golden chains not to live unto himself, but unto Him that died for him and rose again. And in view of such a demonstration of divine love and goodness, such a transcendent beneficence to creatures so unworthy, such treasures of eternal good now brought to man through Jesus Christ, it was to him a monstrous thing that any one should continue in enmity and refuse to be reconciled to God.

But a further point presented by the apostle is,

II. That God had Constituted Ambassadors to carry to Rebellious Men the Knowledge of what had thus been Done, and to Beseech them in Christ's stead to be Reconciled.

The Christian ministry is part of the divine machinery for the conveyance and impartation of salvation. Without it we could never have known of these wonderful doings of divine love in our behalf. "*How shall they hear without a preacher?*" Wherefore, when He who came as God's Messenger of peace ascended up on high, leading captivity captive,

He gave gifts unto men; "and He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ"—all to bring men into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God (Eph. 4:8–13). To these, called and endowed for the purpose, God had committed "the ministry of reconciliation," to act as "ambassadors for Christ," as though God Himself spoke by them. In His stead they were to pray and beseech alien souls to be reconciled to God. Under this divine commission Paul and his fellow-laborers in the Gospel were acting at the time. Working together with each other and with God, by authority of God, and in the name of God, their office was to testify to the reality of the divine love in Christ, to declare the free, full, and everlasting forgiveness of all sin through the bloodshedding on Calvary, and to beseech men not to receive the grace of God in vain—not to let this stupendous display of the divine goodness pass for nothing.

Great and wonderful was the office thus committed to earthen vessels, and great and wonderful were the diligence, the care, the devotion, the heroism, the suffering, and the oppressive toils with which Paul and his fellow-laborers executed the momentous trust. The text tells something of their constant study not to give offence, that no blame might attach to the discharge of their office as an impertinence, a presumption, or a disreputable intermeddling with affairs; how they toiled to approve themselves to

men as verily the ministers of God; what afflictions, necessities, and distresses befell them in their work; what stripes, imprisonments, and mob-violence they were compelled to endure in executing their sacred embassage; with what patience and devotion they had persevered; to what watchings and fastings they were subjected; and what a rough and perilous way they had to travel in carrying out their ministerial commission. A picture of self-immolating heroism, such as never could have been if the Gospel were a deception or a lie, presents itself in these men of God as they went forward with their apostolic ministry, "by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report." It is one of the wonders of the ages how tenaciously they held on, willingly suffering, "as deceivers and yet true, as unknown and yet well known, as dying and yet alive, as chastened yet not killed, as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing, yet possessing all things;" never flinching, never surrendering, never stopping at anything that virtuous men could do, "if that by any means they might save some."

Such men, with such an office, and fulfilling it with such a spirit, at such pains, and under such trials, with no other aim than to further the work of rendering the grace of God effectual to the reconciliation of people to the good Father who sent them, deserved consideration. Their earnest teachings and

entreaties were entitled at least to some weight with those who heard them. And when, under such a commission, at such personal costs, they came beseeching their fellow-men to leave off wicked rebellion and gratefully embrace the grace of God which it was their office to publish, the apostle claims it as a thing with which no honorable and sane mind should trifle, and which should move every hearer to the most earnest attention. As nothing but the constraining power of divine love could induce such endeavor on their part, so the presence and efforts of these ambassadors of God were enough in all reason to command the serious consideration of men and to prompt them to grateful acceptance of the proffered reconciliation.

Furthermore, as the result of all these sacred demonstrations, the apostle brought before his readers the great fact,

III. That the Day of Salvation had now Come to Them.

By what God had done through the sending of His Son, and by what His ambassadors were doing in His name, everything was present and complete for every one to come to the most happy terms with Heaven. They thus had "the word of reconciliation" proclaiming free amnesty from the throne to all willing to accept of it. They had the sacraments as the vehicles, signs, and seals of Jehovah's favor and readiness to make them His ransomed and adopted children and heirs. They had brought to them the entire economy of God's unparalleled love

by which to become participants of eternal life. The supreme hour of their highest possible privilege had arrived, so that it could be said, "*Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.*" What patriarchs, prophets, and holy kings of the preceding generations contemplated with exultation, and thrilled with desire to see, was then present for the everlasting profit of every one of them.

And the same good providence which brought such a day of blessed opportunity to them has brought the same to us and to all to whom the Gospel is preached. The signed and sealed reprieve and absolution for every condemned and perishing soul is here. However guilty or far gone in sin and rebellion against God any one may be, heaven's doors are wide open to him, and the free, instantaneous, and everlasting forgiveness of God is now preached to him through Jesus Christ. Grace, life, and salvation are not only present and divinely pledged, but press on all sides and knock at every avenue of the soul for admission, that this alienation and strife with God may be ended. No one can say that the precious offer is not for him, for the word is, "Ho! *every one* that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price" (Isa. 55 : 1). The offers and the invitations are as wide and all-embracing as it is in the power of language to make them. The wickedest and the worst, even though they should be the worn-out slaves of impiety, lust, and sin, are not excluded; nor is the proposal any less for them than for the

most honorable and virtuous. Christ died for the wickedest of men, and prayed His forgiveness even upon those who nailed Him to His cross. And whether among earth's worthiest or earth's worst, to whomsoever the Gospel message comes, the offer of free forgiveness comes with it, and there the day of salvation is, if people will but embrace and improve it.

Yes, dear friends, an exalted good-fortune has been vouchsafed to us that such a day of grace is ours. Blessed are our eyes that see and our ears that hear such offers from that very Throne against which we have been in such unjust rebellion! That God in heaven should set such favor upon vile children of the dust—that He should be willing now, and bring us tidings of His willingness, through Jesus Christ, to accept and embrace us as His own dear children, to number us with His saints, to crown us among His honored ones, and never more to remember against us any of all our many sins, if only we consent to be the obedient subjects of His grace—presents a sum of good and condescension which no language can adequately express, no computation measure, no mind of man fully understand. That the criminal of to-day should be a holy king to-morrow—that a lifelong rebel should be welcomed as a beloved child by the Sovereign he has done all he could to unseat—that the chance is here for even the sons of Belial, without further accountability for past iniquities, to become the sons of God—and that the offer is made in good faith to Jews and Gentiles, barbarians, Scythians, bond and free alike, without

need that any one should fail,—this is generosity like a God, to neglect, despise, or trifle with which is the sin of sins and the crime of crimes. Could the like be propounded to the lost, perdition's walls would tumble down before the shouts of joy it would occasion. And we sink lower than clods and brutes and demons not to be touched and moved by the contemplation of mercy and privilege so unspeakable.

But, with all this astounding grace of God brought us in the blessed Gospel of Jesus the apostle refers to the further fact,

IV. That God's Grace may be Received in Vain.

Not every one who hears the Gospel is saved by it. Many have no appreciation of it, and with them it passes for nothing. Some contemn and reject it as silliness or antiquated superstition, and will not believe a word of it. Some attack and fight it as a thing which ought to be crushed out of the world as an enemy to human liberty, progress, and peace. Some are more malignant and blasphemous toward God because of it, and because some good and honest people are led to accept and rejoice in it as man's true and only hope. Some think well of its moral precepts, but feel no further need of it, and superciliously ridicule its great central doctrine of salvation by the blood of atonement. Some seize hold upon it with noisy enthusiasm and are loud in their ado over it, but fail to show in their lives any practical fruits of its regenerating and sanctifying power. Some believe, and are happy in their faith, and run

well for a season, but afterward cool in their devotions, lose their first love, fall into one negligence after another, and finally are as dead to all these things as if they never had lived at all. And of all these it is to be said that they "receive the grace of God in vain." Its object with them is not attained. Their coldness toward God, their false ways of estimating Him, their self-will as against His law and rightful claims, their dislike of His service and hatred of everything that savors of dutifulness to Him, turn the whole thing to naught, as if no movement to redeem and save them had ever been made. The summer comes, the harvest passes, and all the wonderful demonstrations of almighty goodness are before them; but their stony hearts are not melted, their rebellious attitude is not changed, the condition of their souls is not bettered.

Dear friends, there is something intensely saddening in the contemplation that the holy apostle was necessitated so tenderly and earnestly to beseech his readers not to receive the grace of God in vain—that there should be danger of people doing such a thing as that from which he labored so hard to dissuade. And yet it was not a superfluity of anxiety. He knew that this would be the result in many instances—what a calamity that would be to them—what blessed things brought to their very doors it would turn to nothingness and increased condemnation—what injustice it would be to themselves as well as a wicked thwarting of the sublimest movements of divine love and compassion—what a crying shame and ingratitude it would show toward the costly

mercies of Jesus and the great toils, expenditures and sufferings of those who at such amazing sacrifices had brought the Gospel to them—and what an augmentation of the darkness of their destiny it would be to them to neglect, spurn, and put away from them so great salvation;—and it could not but stir and trouble his great soul. We know of corresponding instances in which his tears fell on his parchment as he wrote that many with all these transcendent mercies of God proved themselves "the enemies of the cross of Christ;" and here we can almost see the big drops forming in his eyes and rolling down his cheeks as he said to these Corinthians, "We then, as workers together with God, *beseech you also* that ye receive not the grace of God in vain."

Nor can we conceive of a greater sadness or misfortune for any one living than to have all this amazing mercy of God and all these consuming labors and sufferings of His ambassadors expended upon them without avail. What an account will such have to render to the eternal Judge! What excuse or apology will they plead when they come to stand before Him who gave His life for them, and sent His faithful servants to offer them eternal amnesty and salvation, which they have rejected? What will they answer for neglecting and despising the superlative love of God, the immolation of the Son of the Highest for their redemption, and all the afflictive toils and sufferings of prophets, apostles, and ministers of God to bring them to reconciliation? What will they answer for cheating their own needy and

perishing souls out of the salvation brought to them and pressed upon them at so many sacrifices? And when, to all their other sins, they have added the unpardonable wickedness of trampling God's dear-bought deliverance, what must needs be their fate?

And yet one other point is urged by the apostle—namely,

V. That God's Offers of Grace and Salvation are Limited as to Time.

Mercy has its day, but it is a day that soon comes to a close. The proposals of divine love are too costly and too stupendous long to be left open to those who neglect and despise them. There was a day of grace and a time for repentance given to the rebellious and apostate people on the other side of the Flood, but it was misimproved, and soon summary judgment came and closed it up for ever. There was a space allowed to the wicked Ninevites to humble themselves ere destruction should come, but it was limited to forty days. A year of grace and further trial was granted for the unfruitful fig tree at the gardener's intercession, but if that passed without improvement the axe was to hew it down. Jerusalem had a day of gracious visitation, but it was sinned away in unbelief, and there came a day of judgment and doom to that hardened and stiff-necked people which eighteen hundred years have not exhausted. And so it is in every case, with every soul.

In general, the day of grace is one's natural life. We had no such day before we were born, and we

will have no such day after we are dead. Our chances are all limited and confined to this present life. But in the course of life crises or occasions come which are more emphatically our days of grace —times when God comes closest, speaks the loudest, presses His claims the hardest, and compels decision one way or the other. Sundays, when the preached Word comes to us with power—days of affliction, of escape from danger and threatening calamity, of sore bereavement, of heavy disappointment, of solitary thoughtfulness, and mysterious awakenings of conscience when thoughts of God and eternity search and shake the soul—are such days and accepted times. Then the heavenly breezes come to the becalmed and drifting ship that we may improve our chance and get away from the place of danger and of death. The Lenten season, periods of special interest in the Church, times when there seems to be something in the very air to make people think of their souls,—all are occasions when the chariots of salvation come near, pressing us to decision and tending to fix our entire destiny.

But all these seasons are only for the time being. They soon pass away. Life itself is soon over. The years rapidly glide by. Sundays and periods of seriousness presently give place to the ordinary current of cares and business; the Lenten appeals and admonitions soon subside; the hour of solemn feeling passes. And no one can tell whether the present call may not be his last. To-morrow is always among the uncertainties. The opportunities of to-day may never have a morrow. Dismissing them

unimproved, there is no assurance that they will ever return. There be some who will never see another Lenten time, and it is as likely to be one as another. Hence the earnest admonition of the apostle, "Behold, *now* is the accepted time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation." This present as the message comes—this present as the days are passing—this present while life and reason last—this present while the voice of God's ambassadors sounds in your ears and knocks at the door of your heart—this present while the bleeding Saviour pleads and your neglected Father waits to be gracious—this vanishing NOW, beyond which no promise has been given,—is your time to be reconciled to God.

Child of sin and sorrow, behold your opportunity. Consider to what a crisis your life has come. Think what almighty goodness has done and is doing for you. See what a day of salvation has lifted its light upon you and what gracious overtures come to you from your Maker's throne. And by all that is precious in the love of God or touching in the suffering compassion of Jesus, by all that the ministers of grace have borne and done to bring to you the Gospel offers of peace and forgiveness, and by all that is great and glorious in eternal redemption, I join my voice with that of apostles in beseeching you not to receive the grace of God in vain. Nay, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead be reconciled to God—be reconciled to God. Sink on thy knees, O sinful one, before thy Maker's throne; confess to forbearing Heaven the wrong to which thou hast lent thy soul; humble thyself for

thine impenitence and iniquities; and take the pardon which thy God would give. Accept salvation from thy misery now that it has come and may be thine. Think on thy Saviour's tears and blood shed to recover thee to fealty to thy gracious Father. View the cross which has reconciled Heaven, and let it crucify thine enmity and reconcile *thee*. Again, I pray and beseech thee, receive not this matchless grace of God in vain.

Second Sunday in Lent.

1 THESS. 4: 1–8: Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more.

For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus.

For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor; not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles, which know not God: that no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified.

For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.

He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God who hath also given unto us his Holy Spirit.

THE Christian calling is a call to holiness. The Gospel indeed proposes to us a free and gratuitous forgiveness. We "unanimously believe, teach, and confess that poor sinful man is justified before God—that is, absolved, and declared free from all sins and from the sentence of His well-deserved condemnation, and is adopted as a child and an heir of eternal life—without any human merit or worthiness, and without any antecedent, present, or subsequent works, out of pure grace, for the sake of the merit, the perfect obedience, the bitter sufferings, death, and resurrection of Christ our Lord alone, whose obedience is

imputed to us for righteousness, through the Holy Spirit, by faith in the promises of the Gospel." But "it must not be imagined that a justifying faith can comport with accompanying wilfulness in sin and violations of conscience. When a man believes to justification, his faith at once becomes active in love. Hence, good works always follow justifying faith, and are certainly found with it wherever it is vital and true, for it is never alone."

There never was a more strenuous asserter of an absolutely gratuitous forgiveness and justification of sinful man than the apostle Paul. Everywhere and always and at all hazards his preaching was, "that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law," and that any man, hoping for salvation through his keeping of the law, is "fallen from grace," and Christ is become to him "of none effect." And yet no man was ever more diligent than he in teaching and preaching the importance and necessity of a pure and virtuous life, or more earnest in "affirming constantly that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works." He ever insisted that a new creation by grace in Christ Jesus has good works and practical holiness as its end, and that the same is as natural to a state of favor with God as fruit to a living tree. An impressive example of his endeavors in this direction we have in the Epistle for to-day, which deserves at our hands a devout and earnest consideration.

These Thessalonians were already Christians. Paul certifies that they had "turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait

for His Son from heaven." They had received His Gospel as indeed the Word of God. And the same did effectually work in them, to the great delight and satisfaction of their apostolic instructor. So much had already been accomplished that Paul was encouraged to hope and pray that God would establish their hearts unblamable in holiness unto the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ with all saints. But something yet remained as entering into the requirements to this glorious consummation. And that *το λοιπον* —remaining matter—was, on his part, that they should be admonished as in the text, and on their part that they should diligently lay to heart and follow the same.

They were Christians, and had received of the apostle a knowledge of what pertained to a consistent Christian life. They had also thus far shown an appreciation of those instructions and a commendable observance of them. And the first thing that Paul asked of them was that they should increase and abound more and more in their exemplary devotion.

Spiritual religion is a growth. Like everything else that lives, it has its infancy and its maturity, and its gradual progress from the one to the other. We may be forgiven at once, and introduced into the Christian kingdom at once, but we cannot become mature Christians and ripe saints at once. We need continually to learn, and to advance in experience and in attainments of all sorts. The apostle here likens Christian life to a "*walk*." There are many steps intervening between its starting-point and its

goal. We cannot step from the beginning to the end at one bound. There must be step after step, day after day, and month after month, and year after year, the whole life through. And the first item of the exhortation relates to a proper and incessant keeping up of this progress in all the virtues and excellences of Christian character and attainment. It is the same to which Peter refers where he exhorts us to give all diligence to add to our faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity; and also where he enjoins upon us to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 1 : 5–7; 3 : 18). There is no such thing as standing still in religion. When a tree ceases to grow it begins to die; and it is the same with our piety. We must advance. And, however strict and faithful we have been in the past, we are to "abound more and more." We are never so established that we can afford to be easy with ourselves or consent to a relaxation of our prayers, our watchfulness, and our careful keeping from the ways of the wicked world. As soon as we begin to think that we now have done, that we have reached a point where we may rest, that so much incessant endeavor so long continued can now afford to be less earnest and less strenuous, we are in great danger of making shipwreck of all that we have attained. Having received how we ought to walk and to please God, we are to become more abundant in our conformity thereto.

And if any one is in doubt as to the proper rule by which a Christian is to regulate his life, the ten commandments will inform him. The laws of morality are eternal, and change not with dispensations. And those laws are mercifully embodied by God Himself in what He gave by the hand of Moses from the mountain that quaked and smoked with the majesty of His presence. It is not the law by which we are justified, but it is the law by which we are to judge of what is sinful or acceptable to God, and by which we are for ever bound to seek to regulate our lives. And in the morality of that law we are ever to exercise ourselves.

More particularly the apostle admonishes his readers to purity and sanctity of life. He beseeches them to be very careful to "*abstain from fornication;*" that is, from all sexual uncleanness in thought, word, and deed, and whatsoever in dress, behavior, or association tends to foster or encourage it. This was perhaps the most dominant and debasing form of crime among the populations of those times, as it is still where the influences of pure religion are absent. The world and the hearts of mankind are full of it, and forms of it prevail where we would hardly deem it possible. What Paul bewailed in the disorderly church of Corinth must also be said of modern Christendom and of churches now, that there are "many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed" (2 Cor. 12: 21). What he said of the heathen is, alas! too true of many professed Christians, that "it is a shame

even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret" (Eph. 5 : 12). The guilty ones flatter themselves that no one knows of their hidden impurities, but they are mistaken. The tracks of crime are not so easily concealed even from men, and all is naked and open unto the eyes of angels and of God

But from all transgressions of this nature the solemn requirement of our holy religion is that we keep ourselves clean and pure. "Fornication and all uncleanness or evil desire, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints" (Eph. 5 : 3). These are "works of the flesh," everywhere fearfully anathematized, and than which there are none more destructive of all moral sensibility, more profoundly at war with the Christian calling, or more full of guilt and misery. If there is anything upon which ministers, physicians, teachers of morals, and conservators of the bodies and souls of mankind need to speak, it is upon the dreadful criminality of indulgence in this class of sins. And, as far as these words may be heard or carried, I would say most earnestly, as a minister of Jesus Christ, "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul" (1 Pet. 2 : 11); for "neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor self-defilers, nor abusers of themselves with mankind . . . shall inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 6 : 9, 10).

It is further urged by the apostle "*that every one should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor.*" The meaning of this peculiar language

is much plainer in the more accurate translation of Conybeare and Howson in these words: "And that each of you should learn to get the mastery over his bodily desires in purity and honor; not in lustful passions, like the heathen who know not God." The conception is the same as that where Paul says, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection;" more literally, "I hit my body under the eye, and lead it about as my slave" (1 Cor. 9 : 27). The idea is, that instead of serving divers lusts and pleasures, and thus making one's self a slave and worshipper of the body and its appetites and desires, we are to learn to subdue and master it and to bring it into a pure and honorable service above and beyond its own miserable pleasure.

As a servant in subjection the body is a great and noble instrument. It was in it that our redemption was wrought by the Son of God. It is not to be despised as evil, nor is separation from it to be wished. But as a master it is a tyrant and a destroyer. Our great business, therefore, as Christians is to learn to subjugate it to purity and holiness—to make it the instrument of a useful and honorable life—to conquer it to the service of God, instead of allowing ourselves to be enslaved by its lusts and appetencies. The fact is that most people live only for the body. They have no higher object of absorbing desire than to serve the body—to feed and pamper it—to clothe and adorn it—to gratify and please it—to have everything comfortable, easy, pleasant, and good for it,—no matter who is made to suffer or whatever other interests of their own or

others are sacrificed. This is true of the heathen who know not God, and it is, alas! only too true of many who know better and of whom better things are to be expected. The Gospel demands of us to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God. There is not an item of bodily ease, not a pleasure of life, not a comfort or enjoyment in this world, which we are to esteem too precious to be surrendered upon the altar of our Lord. We had better any time forego all earthly good, even to the laying down of life itself, than lend ourselves to sin and wrong for the poor momentary comfort or pleasure it may give us. And to school ourselves to such an inflexible sovereignty of right and honor over all corporeal lusts and appetites is what the apostle here enjoins as the duty and office of every one who would be a Christian.

Still further does the apostle lay upon Christians to be strict in regarding one another's rights in all these things, "*that no man go beyond or defraud his brother in this matter;*" not, in general, "any matter," but, as the original is, "in *the* matter;" that is, in the particular matter of his carnal indulgences. The meaning is that no Christian is to be guilty of stealing away to his own pleasure the companion, child, or ward of another—no, not even though otherwise lawful wedlock be contemplated, and much less unlawful—and that it is sin for us to beguile or entice away an object of affection from a father, mother, guardian, or natural protector in whose care, oversight, or possession that object properly belongs. Marriages without the knowledge and consent of

parents, runaway matches, and all clandestine arrangements for the furtherance and gratification of carnal love against the will and authority of those who have a right to a voice in the matter, are here forbidden, both in the parties themselves and in those who may favor and abet them. They involve a species of fraud, injustice, and overreaching in which no Christian is allowed to have a hand.

And for all this the apostle alleges the unmistakable will of God Himself: "*For this is the will of God, even your sanctification.*" Nor can there be any doubt upon this point, much as materialists and sensualists may plead the law of their nature as an excuse for their uncleannesses and crimes.

In every manifestation which God has made of Himself in His communications with men He has shown that His will is to have us free and pure from all sensual debauchery. To whatever epoch or dispensation we look—patriarchal, Jewish, or Christian —the intimation is the same.

It was the prevalence of a sensual spirit before the Flood which brought on that terrible catastrophe, by which all the world except eight persons perished. It was just "when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, and the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair, and took them wives of all which they chose," that it repented the Lord that He had made man, and that His great judgment was let loose for their destruction. The Saviour's own account is that "they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage"—driving the trade of

sensuality and carnal pleasure as the great study and business of their lives—"until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the Flood came and took them all away" (Matt. 24 : 37–39). And from the floating and putrefying carcasses of a drowned world comes the proclamation, "*This is the will of God, even your sanctification.*"

When the Lord called Abraham and set apart his descendants from all other people, He said unto them, "Ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, a holy nation;" and thundered it into their ears from Sinai's flaming brow, "Thou shalt not commit adultery;" and prescribed in all their ceremonies, "Be ye holy, for I the Lord your God am holy;" and ordained in their law, in connection with the horrid catalogue of unchaste sins, "Whosoever shall commit any of these abominations, even the souls that commit them shall be cut off;" and flamed through all their history, in the wilderness and in Canaan, the same great truth: "*This is the will of God, even your sanctification.*"

Sodom, the unnatural brutality and uncleanness of whose inhabitants has linked its name to certain otherwise nameless crimes, went down in fire and flood, principally on account of its base unchastity; and from the still gurgling sea of death and salt at the bottom of which it lies the voice of judgment mutters to this day, "*This is the will of God, even your sanctification.*"

As to the Psalms, David has given the keynote of all their teachings on this subject where he cries, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a

right spirit within me." As to the prophets, Isaiah speaks the voice of all of them in those pungent words of the Almighty: "Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes." As to Jesus, the tenor of all His communications was, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. . . . Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." As to the apostles, they all unite in their Epistles in the common testimony that "God hath not called us to uncleanness, but unto holiness." And up to the last chapters of Revelation we still hear it resounding that "the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone"—all attesting that "*This is the will of God, even your sanctification.*"

And what God has so fully declared in his Word and so fearfully re-echoed by His providence is equally manifest in the institutions of His grace. Why has He given us a Saviour at all? and why did He manifest in Him a human life so pure and spotless? and why has He arranged for us a system of truths so thoroughly adapted to wean from sin to purity and righteousness? and why has He appointed His Church with its vows of renunciation of all sinful desires of the flesh, its sacrament of washing from unrighteousness, its supper of communion with the heavenly Jesus, its ministerial economy of watchful discipline, and the Holy Ghost inwrought and embodied in the whole to help our infirmities and to renew in us the image of Him who created us? In

all we have token and proof that "*This is the will of God, even our sanctification.*"

From all this it is sufficiently manifest that Christianity is a religion of purity. It proposes purity and a chaste and continent life as its moral end and object. It furnishes the graces and means for the attainment of such a life, and it obligates and binds its professors to such a life on pain of the avenging wrath of almighty God. It is a great and joyous calling which it brings to us, offering free and unspeakable treasures of forgiveness and grace; but it is a calling to cease for ever from all uncleanness, lechery, incontinence, and fleshly defilements and lusts—a calling to holiness, purity, sanctification, likeness to Jesus and to heaven. Of this "holy calling" to purity and sanctity of life have we, as Christian people, been made partakers. And if we dare to hope for salvation at all, that hope is unchangeably linked with these binding obligations to purity and holiness of living.

What, then, has been our answer to these demands of God and His Gospel? Have we indeed come out from the dominion of a mere heathenish and sensual life? Have we really "escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust"? Having been called with a holy calling, has it been our studied aim, effort, and growing desire daily to become more holy? Or have we been living this while under the dominion of vile affections, adding to the condemnation of nature the greater condemnation of abused grace? Oh, it is a fearful thing to be wearing the Christian name and enjoying Christian

privileges, and yet to live in the impurities and uncleannesses of unsanctified nature—to take to ourselves the hopes of salvation without purifying ourselves as our Lord and God is pure!

This, then, is the solemn season, and this is the object of these appointed lessons of Lent, to lead us to diligent self-examination and to honest repentance and improvement of our lives. The voice of God thus comes to us now afresh to wash us, make us clean, and put away the evil of our doings from before His eyes. The blessed Church of God, in whom His Word and Spirit ever lives and speaks, is now with one voice and with trembling utterance exhorting and beseeching us to put from us all filthinesses of the flesh and of the spirit, and to set forward with new and higher earnestness to bring our bodies into subjection and to separate ourselves for ever from the debasing lusts and corruptions which reign in the impure and the unsanctified. If we have been the slaves of evil habits and lustful transgression, the voice of our Lord and Judge calls upon us now to repent and break off for ever. If we have been living in uncleanness, the command to us is to make an end of all such doings. If the conscience of any one reproaches him with deeds of vice and guilt, the Word is, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord." There is no other way of escape, and to this the sacred admonition is to fly at once.

And even if we have no vile immoralities with which to accuse ourselves, let us not therefore sup-

pose ourselves safe. No mere outward propriety of life and manners can save us. Pride, unbelief, and hardness and impurity of heart may coexist with the most decorous outward behavior. The world may esteem us good, and we may esteem ourselves good and useful and pure, while yet we may never have repented of our neglect of Christ and of our refusal to give Him and His grace the honor of all that makes us differ from the vilest of men. What we need is a living union with Him, which makes Him the centre of all our hopes, desires, and endeavors, and which consecrates us to Him for ever in a living, ever-growing, ever-purifying faith, obedience, and love.

And to this may the good Lord help us all and bless the solemn lessons of this hour!

> Blest are the pure in heart. Wouldst thou be blest?
> He'll cure thy spotted soul. Wouldst thou find rest?
> Around thy toils and cares He'll breathe a calm,
> And to thy wounded spirit lay a balm;
> From fear draw love; and teach thee where to seek
> Lost strength and grandeur, with the bowed and meek.

Third Sunday in Lent.

EPH. 5 : 1–9 : Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor.

But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.

For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.

Be not ye therefore partakers with them.

For ye were sometime darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light; (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth.)

THE word here rendered "'*followers*" is the same from which our word *mimic* is derived. The Revised Version renders it, "Be ye therefore *imitators* of God, as beloved children."

There are some things in which it is impossible for us to be like God or to imitate Him. No creature can be like Him in self-existence, eternity, and omnipotence. God is God, and must for ever remain God, clothed with perfections which no creature can wear. His eternal power and Godhead cannot be transferred. Nor would it be to our advantage to

share in His almightiness. The most powerful men have generally been the worst. Power lodged in human hands has ever tended to injure the holders of it, damaging the moral nature as it exalted the outward estate. Ability to raise the dead, control the elements, or command without limit has nothing in it to make one better. Humble dependence, patient self-denial, and a loving charity in ordinary life are worth a thousand-fold more to the soul than long years of mere power and greatness. And it is a mercy rather than a privation that we cannot be like God in His natural attributes.

But there are respects in which we *can* be like God. His moral nature we can and should imitate. The Scriptures abound with inculcations to this. Though the child cannot be the father, it can still embody the father-spirit, duplicate in some measure the father-life, and reflect the father-likeness. What the father doeth may be a model and a copy for the son. The father may so live in the son that all who see him can see the father-features and know the relationship. And thus we are to be imitators of God as His own beloved children; that is to say, as a living German preacher puts it,

I. Love like God, since God is Love;
II. Be Holy like God, since God is Holiness;
III. Shine like God, since God is Light.

I.

The spring, scope, essence, and end of Christian doctrine and precept is love. The end of the com-

mandment is charity. Love is the fulfilling of the law. Love is the chief of evangelic virtues, the prime fruit of the Spirit, the bond of perfection, the consummation of all other graces. In the pyramid to be built on faith Peter mentions charity as the topstone and crown in which everything is brought to the finish and full symmetry of beauty. And as imitators of God we are to "*walk in love*."

The love of God no mind can measure. It took the universe to express it. The whole creation is nothing but a product and exhibit of the divine goodness. Worlds in their constitutions, stars in their settings, all beings in their God-given spheres, and all histories of providence, are but the letters which spell out the one great and all-conditioning attribute of Jehovah's love. We call Him by a name which is the word *Good* intensified, and the profoundest expression of His essence was that glorious embodiment of love to which the apostle here refers, even Christ, who also hath loved us and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love" (1 John 4: 10, 16).

And here is a point in which we may be like God and copy after Him, and have in us the true Father-likeness. We can be like Jesus, and Jesus was embodied Love, the true essence of the Father manifested in the flesh. Seeing Him, we see the Father, for He was in the Father and the Father in Him

In our human life "He hath left us an example, that we should follow His steps." That humble growth in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man, was divine love impersonated in earthly childhood, showing us the true child-life in its exact likeness to God and fulfilling the whole will and mind of God in the child-state. He was subject to His parents and served them with cheerfulness and affection, and conformed with glad contentment to all the requirements of His child-sphere. Though rich, He became poor, that He might make others rich and show us eternal love set in human deeds and aims and principles of human action. He spurned the frivolous pursuits, vain pomps, and gay follies of this world, and gave Himself to works of solid worth, devotion, and beneficence, that we might observe the real tone and attributes of a life conditioned to the heart and perfections of the heavenly Father. He denied Himself to serve others, sympathized with the suffering, ministered to the sorrowing, and went about doing good, hating falsehood and deceit, rebuking iniquity by life and word, and setting an example of religious dutifulness, showing how divine goodness shapes itself when put into the forms, relations, and activities of a true human life. He was the incarnation of Deity—the nature of Him who is love put into the condition of a true man.

And this loving goodness of Christ was not by constraint—not put on from without. It welled out of Him as water from a spring. He lived the life of love because love was His life, His nature, His animating soul. Why does the musician sing or the

artist paint or the orator joy in speech? It is the nature of each. Why does the bird trill its notes and feed its young and mount the sky with outpourings of song? It is its nature, it is the expression of its being, it is the outflowing of what is planted in it by its Maker. And so was Christ's love. It was the welling forth of the life of God in Him.

It is the nature of God to do good. He loves to give and bless life. He loves to restore it when blurred and perverted, to refresh it when faint, to help it when weak, to save it when endangered, to make it good when evil, and to make it happy by making it good. He is so beneficent, so tender, so merciful, so patient, so forgiving, so gracious, because it is His nature. It is the way His being runs. His love ever flows because He is love. He gave us His Son, and delivered Him up freely as the sacrifice for our redemption, and the Son gave Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor—the Father in the Son and the Son in the Father, one divine heart in the same divine act of good to His fallen creature, man—because it pleased God and was the true exponent, outflow, and joy of the divine essence. And the intention of all is, that we may so partake of the divine nature that the same love which flowed in and through Christ may flow in and through us as the active and controlling principle of our being, making us like Him, the true children of eternal love and goodness.

It is the nature of love to beget love, and for the love begotten to conform itself to the one begetting it. If we love according to the divine love to us,

we are born of God, are like God, and God lives in us and we in Him; and if we love not according to the divine love to us, we are not of God and cannot be His beloved children. "We love Him because He first loved us." The spring of all holy love is in Him. And as we love Him, we must needs love what He loves, and become transfused with the same love to the same objects of love; so that "if a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar" —a self-contradiction, a false claimant to sonship with the divine Father, who is love. Hence we are to be imitators of God—reproducers in our sphere of what characterizes Him who is THE GOOD—by walking in love, as Christ also loved us and hath given Himself for us. We are to love like God because God is love.

II.

But God is holiness as well as love. To be truly His children we must therefore imitate and seek to reproduce this also. The apostolic admonition demands that we be holy like God, since He is holy. "No whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God;" "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God of hosts." No evil can dwell with Him or find place in His heart and favor. His word for ever is, "Be ye holy, for I the Lord your God am holy." Though He is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in goodness, yet He cannot look with allowance upon sin and will by no means clear the guilty. Even when His only-begotten and coequal

Son stood before Him in the room and stead of sinful man, His wrath did not cease nor His hand waver till the utmost farthing demanded by infinite justice was paid in the life-blood of that unspotted Victim. If sin is nothing, if God cares not about it, if He is too good and merciful to punish it, why did He give over His own dear Son to the unspeakable agonies of the garden and the cross when He took upon Him to answer for the wickedness of man? If sin is a trifle, how came He to forget to be gracious at that dread moment when the shafts of His violated law launched forth to drain the life of the darling of His bosom? When, where, or how could there be a more overwhelming utterance of His implacable abhorrence of sin, and His consuming anger with it, than that which He thus proclaimed to the universe? Had he crowded the pit with criminals for their crimes, had He reddened a thousand worlds with the blood of offenders in indignation at their sins, it would not have been half so intense an exhibit as this one solitary example in which He made the soul of His only Son a sacrificial curse for man's transgressions, which that Son in His goodness had assumed. To reach sin, to kill sin, to satisfy outraged justice and right, He did not turn back nor spare even when the dear Saviour was the victim. Whom, then, will He spare? In whose case will He turn back when found in sin's array?

It is no lack of goodness that God is severe upon sin. It is not love in a ruler to be indifferent to what undermines his dominion and destroys the peace and order of his kingdom. It is not want of

love that induces him to oppose and punish what would ruin his realm and bring wretchedness on his subjects. "A God all mercy is a God unjust." And what is justice itself but love employed in the necessary offices of government? There can be no peace without order, no happiness without law; and law which has no penalties for transgression is no law at all. Goodness must therefore cease to be goodness if it has no wrath, no indignation, no punishment for what would render order and happiness impossible. To make light of sin or to connive at it would itself be crime—a wrongful indifference to the preservation of that authority on which all good and happiness depends. It is because God is good that He holds sin in abomination and will not look upon it with allowance. He must hate it, and punish it too, or His very love to His true subjects fails, and all that His blessed government makes firm to His children comes to naught. He must be at everlasting war with unholiness, or He would be a one-sided and not a perfect God in whom we may securely trust. If God loves His children, and proposes to secure to them abiding blessedness, that same love requires that He should be strict and severe against what tends to their hurt. Sin is the only thing that can hurt them, and hence the stern requirement that they keep and guard themselves against sin.

The seed of a holy God must needs strive to be holy. To be true children they need to wear the Father-likeness. The only-begotten Son was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, neither was guile found in His mouth. He was no less the

Son of God in His sinlessness than in other respects. This was at least one mark and characteristic of His divine Sonship. And for us to be God's beloved children we need to copy after Him, and resist even unto blood, striving against sin.

An unclean life and a covetous heart are not born of the Spirit of God, and cannot coexist with divine sonship. They dare not so much as have a name among those who would be saints. He who hath the Gospel hope in him purifieth himself as God is pure. Filthiness of body or soul, indifference to the slime and dirt so apt to adhere to us from this foul world, and allowance of the soils and taints of earth and the flesh to remain upon us as if they were nothing, must be carefully avoided and diligently and promptly washed away by fresh and more earnest consecration when contracted.

Indulgence in the talk of fools—talk that is against wisdom and truth—talk that has sin in it—talk that compromises our character and profession as children of God—though it be only *talk*, is very unfitting in a Christian, and is not in harmony with godliness.

And the apostle further exhorts against what he calls by a name which denotes a polished and courteous versatility, which turns about and politely adapts itself to all sorts of occasions, circumstances, and people with whom it happens to fall in—a refined persiflage and badinage for which Ephesus was famed, and which the world is disposed to favor as an agreeable accomplishment—that ready and compliant jollity, for which we have no English word, and which, for want of a better, our translators call

jesting. It means rather that turning to every one with the feeling of "hail, fellow! well met!" whether in refined trifling or more serious cleverness, to bring on a hilarious good-fellowship. Christianity is always courteous and tends to dispose one well toward those around, but an overdone complaisance, and a genial falling in by jest and friendliness with the moods and ways of others for mutual merriment, without regard to principle and propriety, is not according to Christ and quite unfitting a child of God. None of these things comport with divine purity. Christians are to be holy because God, whom they are to imitate, is holy, and cannot favor what savors so much of Satan's blandishments.

A child of God has his conversation in heaven. His fellowship is with the Holy Ghost. His affections are set on things above. He knows whereof he speaks. Life is no jest to him. It is not for him to court and flatter a world which crucified his Saviour and hates his God, and whose lusts and likes are the mortal enemies of his soul. Rather does he seek to withdraw himself from it and to occupy himself in converse with his Father in heaven, for his calling is to be holy, since the God whom he is to be like is holiness.

III.

But God is also light, as well as love and sanctity. He is the Father of lights—the centre and sum of all truth, all intelligence, all illumination. All things have their light from Him, as our whole planetary system has its light from the sun. He ever shines

with the intensest splendor and purity. He dwells in light which no man can approach unto, and sends His radiance and glorious light into all the universe and into all souls. It is by His light that we are enabled to see at all and are quickened into spiritual life, to walk the ways and do the works of the children of light. Hence the good apostle John says: "This, then, is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1 : 5–7).

The light of God shines in His works, in His Word, and in His Son Jesus Christ. Through these He sends forth His illuminating Spirit to give us that true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. Not every one is willing to let that light in. "Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." There is plenty of divine light in the world, ever pressing to find its way into the souls of men. And every true man, anxious to do the right and to get and do the best for his soul, cometh to the light; and into his heart God shines to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God.

By nature or in the common course of things we are all in darkness. The truth we do not know. Ourselves we do not know. God we do not know. Our ruin by sin we do not know. The way of life

and salvation we do not know. So the apostle says it was with those Christians at Ephesus before they were illuminated by the Gospel of God. They were once darkness. But the light of God came, through His Word, to them, teaching them of Christ, of the need of Christ, of hope in Christ, of life and salvation through Christ. To this light they opened their hearts, took it in as God's truth, and were so illumined and quickened by it that they now saw and knew and believed and hoped in the Lord Jesus, and were "no more darkness," but had become "light in the Lord—children of light." It was a great and wonderful transition. A grace of knowledge, privilege, and renewal of being and estate had come to them, and was working all its saving effects upon them.

And just so it is with all Christians. Light has come to them, the light of God shining in upon their darkness, showing them their fallen and sinful condition, the need of a Saviour, and the presence of that Saviour to do for them and save them unto the uttermost. As Christian people we are no longer in darkness. We know the truth. It lies all about us and in us. It is in our minds and in our hearts and in our mouths. To us the light is come, the Gospel day has arrived, the calls and duties of salvation are present. We are no longer darkness, but have become light in God's light.

But, being made light in the Lord, it is for us to shine in that light. As God is a great Illuminator, we cannot be His true children without becoming illuminators also. Children of light must be light-

bearers, diffuse their light, and let it so shine that others, seeing their good works, may glorify the Father in heaven. Of ourselves we have no light, but when God's light pours upon us and into us, and renders us "light in the Lord," we are to reflect that light, show it in our works and walk, and become the instruments of enlightening others with the same glory.

The moon is a dark body in itself—dark as our earth on a cloudy midnight—but when the sun shines upon it, it becomes a body of light by reflection and sends its silvery radiance upon our world, making even the midnight beautiful with its soft illumination. And the Church and people of God make up another moon, dark in themselves, but made light in the rays of the glorious Sun of Righteousness, and meant to reflect that light into the dark places and the dark souls where the direct sunlight is absent. By speech, by deeds, by walk, by testimony, by teaching, by example, and by the Word of truth dwelling in us richly by faith, we become moons, reflectors, and light-bearers to others—to children, servants, associates, friends, and all who come within the reach of our influence. The light having come to us, we are thus to arise and shine, that we may have life ourselves and that we may carry the same light and life into the observation and souls of all with whom we have to do. Being light in the Lord, we are to "walk as children of light"—shine like our God, who is Light; for where the Spirit is in its true fruitfulness and effect, there will be all goodness and righteousness and truth.

Ye see, then, dear friends, our Christian calling. God means us to be His true and beloved children. But as the children of God we are to seek and strive to be like our Father—to imitate and copy after Him. He is Love; therefore are we to be loving and do the works of love and live the life of love and charity. He is Holiness; therefore are we to separate ourselves from all the lusts and uncleannesses of the flesh, and to keep a distinct line between us and the wickednesses and improprieties which stain and characterize the ungodly world. He is Light, from whom we have all our light, quickening, and hope; and therefore we are to conduct ourselves as children of light—as people who know and love the truth—as having our chief delight in obeying the truth and commending it to others for their profit and salvation also.

And from the same we see what a great thing it is to be a thorough Christian. It makes us *like God*—a feeble and crippled resemblance it may be, but still an image of the great God. Such a likeness, even though in feeblest measure, is still a great advance on all the forms of the carnal life. It is a brutish degradation of human nature to wallow in the filth and slough of earthiness and sin. People may think it manly and dignified to despise religion and to assert their freedom to indulge themselves as they like; but sensual life is the life of worms that find their heaven in filth and corruption. To imitate God as beloved children is to conform to the highest excellence, to aspire to the perfection of dignity. The men of faith and Christian devotion are earth's

noblest men. Their place is with the angels on the mount, while the followers of lust and sin stay down in the valley with the asses. It is the nature of faith and Christian effort to purify, elevate, and dignify. It takes a soul up to higher planes of being. It inspires with sublimer feelings, ends, and aims. It allies with God and immortality. The uplifting which the pursuits of worldliness and earthly passion bring is only the exaltation of Haman—a conspicuous disgrace, death on a high gallows. The way of the children of God is that ladder of Jacob trod by the feet of angels and leading into the gates of heaven. And

> When the toils of life are over,
> All this anxious care and pain,
> In that day without a morrow
> They as kings shall ever reign.

Fourth Sunday in Lent.

GAL. 4 : 21–31 : Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? For it is written, that Abraham had two sons; the one by a bond-maid, the other by a free-woman.

But he who was of the bond-woman, was born after the flesh; but he of the free-woman was by promise.

Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar.

For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.

But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.

For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.

Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.

But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.

Nevertheless, what saith the Scripture? Cast out the bond-woman and her son: for the son of the bond-woman shall not be heir with the son of the free-woman.

So then, brethren, we are not children of the bond-woman, but of the free.

THE administrations of God toward men, and the attempts of men to move toward God, come under two distinct and very different systems, the setting forth of the nature and relative bearings of which is the sum and essence of Christian theology. The one is a system

of law and works; the other is a system of grace and faith. These two systems are called "*the two covenants;*" *i. e.* the two engagements or contracts God has made with mankind for the bestowment of His favor and saving benedictions. Both are of divine authority, both propose eternal life to the obedient, and both have had their adherents in every age. The one received its fullest expression in the law which was delivered from Sinai; the other is proposed to us in its highest completeness in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The one is usually called the "covenant of works;" the other, "the covenant of grace." And it is the diverse nature and the mutual relations of these two, and the condition and prospects of man under this or the other, which the apostle illustrates in the Epistle Lesson for to-day. To do this he refers to some well-known occurrences of Old-Testament history, which, for the sake of illustration, he treats as an *allegory; i. e.* a history with a meaning beyond the mere historical facts. That history relates to two noted women connected with the family of Abraham, and to two children which were born to him in his house. These two women were Sarah and Hagar, and these two children were Isaac and Ishmael. The two women represent the two covenants, and these two children represent the relations and fate of men as they belong to these two systems. We will try to follow somewhat the ideas of the apostle in this striking parallel, praying God to help us perceive and embrace the truth, that we may indeed be the children, not of the bond-woman, but of the free.

I. The Two Women.

1. Note here the fact that *Sarah was Abraham's proper and original wife.* The promise was before the law. The covenant of grace was the original covenant. It was not an after-thought which first came into effect when Christ came into the world. Everything on earth rests on a mediatorial basis. If there had been no Redeemer promised and accepted in the divine purpose, Adam would have perished in his sin and never a human being would have been born. It is because of the promise of grace in Christ that the world stood to receive the law. To say nothing, therefore, of what the Scriptures allege of our having been "chosen in Him before the foundation of the world," the giving forth of the promise of grace long preceded the Sinaitic dispensation. "The law was added"—came in as a subsequent appendage—"because of transgression." Grace was first.

2. *Hagar was not a free woman: she was the handmaid of Sarah.* The law never was intended to be mistress over us or to occupy any other place than that of subordination and subserviency to grace. Men had become so wicked, and so hardened and incorrigible in their wickedness, that they needed some special discipline to show them their sins, and break their hard hearts, and terrify their wicked consciences, and arouse them from their self-security and guilty slumbers. And it was just for this end that the law was given. It was meant to alarm and convict men, and to make them see and feel their terrible condition out of Christ. It is the great

thunderbolt of God's almightiness flashed before the sinner's eyes to affright him and make him look about for a Saviour. And it is just in this respect that the law serves as a handmaid to grace. It is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. By the law is the knowledge of sin. It shows us our guilt and condemns us on account of it, and so prepares us to accept a Saviour. Itself, it cannot save us. It was never meant to save us. It is grace, the Gospel, Christ, that does the saving. The law is but the handmaid of the Gospel to bring us to Christ. The obstinacy of sinners has made the law necessary. We cannot dispense with it. Nay, it was mercy that provided it. It serves the original purposes of grace. But its right place is only in subordination to the Gospel. It is Hagar's business to serve Sarah, and nothing more.

3. *Though Sarah was the original wife, Hagar had the first son.* The law had a people before the Christian Church was born. Abraham had a posterity according to the flesh before that other Seed came whose birth was by promise and of the Spirit. There were Jews before there were Christians. Christ was long after Moses. So the bond-woman had her son long before the original wife.

4. *Hagar was an Egyptian, an oppressor. Her very name signifies a terror.* How true is this of the law! Its whole aspect is dark, imperious, and threatening. As it now finds man, its words to him are only menaces and stern prohibitions. It speaks only of the jealousy and holiness of God, His great anger with sin, and His terrific wrath upon transgressors.

It yokes every offender down to condemnation without hope or consolation. Convicting every one of sin, it holds every one to eternal death; for by the deeds of the law can no man living be justified. All its precepts are holy and good, but they only condemn and kill where sin is. Paul says: "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." It destroyed all his confidence and hope. It is just and right, but in the course of justice none of us could ever see salvation. It imposes tasks which it is impossible for disabled man to perform, and loads with a responsibility which we can neither meet nor stand up under.

5. But *Sarah was "a woman fair to look upon."* The courtiers of Egypt noted her beauty and "commended her before Pharaoh." The king of Gerar was smitten with her loveliness. Her very name signifies a thing of sweetness. And such as Sarah was is the covenant of grace in Christ Jesus. Its whole aspect is beautiful, pleasant, and inviting. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of Him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation!" "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass; as showers that water the earth;" "His doctrine shall drop as the rain, His speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass."

How different from Sinai's dark, smoking, thundering, and tempestuous brow is that quiet mount on which Jesus opened and inaugurated the dispensation of His love and made known His mission in

repeated benedictions upon the suffering and the lowly! How touching is the picture in which the anointed Saviour of the world looks meekly out upon earth's bruised and fainting millions, saying, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest"! And let any man but scan the outlines of that grace of God which hath now appeared—its Saviour with a brother's heart—its free pardon for all sins—its glorious assurances of Heaven's enlistment for our good—its promises of ample consolation against every hour of trial and sorrow—its hopes of immortality and a home with angels in the paradise of God—its thousand sweet and hallowing ministrations for our peace; and he will see how the beauty and loveliness of Sarah glows in its every feature and speaks in its every step. It is the song of angels in their joy, shouting, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good-will toward men."

6. Finally, it is said of Hagar that *she vaunted over Sarah* and sought to appropriate to herself the honors of her mistress. The same has happened also with the law. Not from any defect in the law itself, but from the weakness of men, it has ever been coming forward in the history of the Church and in personal experience as if it were the appointed medium of salvation, and thus obtruded itself into the Gospel's place. Need we speak of the Jew, so taken up with works and so confident of his own goodness that he despised others and rejected the doctrines of grace? Need we cite the Papist, thinking to merit heaven by his fasts, vigils, prayers, and

penances? Many among ourselves may be hoping to be saved only because they are free from the vices of other men. But all this is simply Hagar putting herself forward to Sarah's detriment. It is grave error. The promises come not of the law and cannot be obtained by the law. "As many as are of the works of the law," says Paul, "are under the curse;" "For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God." To take up with the law as against the Gospel is a falling from grace, a making of the death of Christ of none effect. The whole spirit of the New Testament is, "*By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.*" This the apostles preached and the first Christians received. And the solemn imprecation is, "If any man preach any other Gospel unto you than ye have received, let him be accursed." As long as Hagar submits to Sarah and gives her the honor, so long she fulfils her true office, but no longer. The deeds of the law must not usurp the place of the merits of Christ.

So much for the TWO WOMEN. We now pass to

II. THE TWO CHILDREN.

The first thing we note concerning them is that, outwardly viewed, *there was but little difference between them.* Both were inmates of one household; both called Abraham father; both were circumcised; both had a deep hold upon the patriarch's affection;

both seem to have been much alike in character, and both appeared to have an equal prospect of inheriting the promise. And, so far as this world is concerned, a strict and honest moralist or legalist does not seem to be a whit behind the true believer. He is just as honorable and commendable in his deportment, just as diligent in attending to his duties, and, apparently, just as hopeful in his prospects for another life. Nay, the Jewish ceremonialist, hoping to bring God in his debt by his excess of fidelity to the rites of the law, and the Papist or the Greek, hoping to buy a passage to heaven by his pilgrimages, prayers, fastings, macerations, and charities, often get more credit for true devotion than those who have really apprehended Christ as their hope. An Ishmael often passes for an Isaac, and an Isaac for an Ishmael, as this world judges. Men are slow to see the difference.

2. But when we examine more closely essential differences appear. *Ishmael was older than Isaac.* Whitefield once said that "all men are born Arminians." Another has said that "we are born Papists." And with equal truth, and for very much the same reason, may it be said that *we are all born Ishmaels* —*i. e.* legalists and ceremonialists and moralists. It is one of the offshoots of our common fallen humanity to seek to work out a righteousness of our own and to count on salvation through our own goodness. Men wish to be their own saviors—to make their way to heaven by their own endeavors. Whilst unreconciled to God through faith in Christ Jesus we are all disposed to palliate and soften and excuse

our sins, to think ourselves no worse than other people, and to repel the idea of being those guilty beings which preachers say we are. We thus seek to justify ourselves and to establish our own righteousness, when we ought to be submitting to the righteousness of God. And every man who has ever come to the exercise of a true surrender to Jesus Christ can point back to a time when he was nothing but a legalist. Ishmael is the elder.

3. *Ishmael was born according to the flesh.* He was the child of an earthly policy which had neither sanction nor command of God. The Almighty never meant men to be legalists, but only by means of the law to help them become the more spiritual and earnest believers in Christ. But of human depravity and thinking it has come to be quite otherwise with many. Isaac, however, "was born after the Spirit." He had been specially promised when there was no human probability of such a thing, and he was the child of divine power and special interposition when in the course of nature his birth was impossible. It is easy enough for men to become legalists. All nature is favorable to it, and all the counsellings of the flesh encourage it. Simple faith in Christ is a more difficult work. It does not lie within the powers of nature at all. "Faith is the gift of God" —not, indeed, without human activity, but in such sense that no human effort can ever beget it without a special enabling grace from the Almighty. A true Christian is born of God, born of the Spirit, born from above.

4. *Ishmael was a slave, whereas Isaac was free.*

There is no liberty in the law. It is a most galling servitude. It imposes the most impractical burdens. It requires us to do what only Christ is able to do. And with all man's attempts to obey, he never reaches a point of rest. His work is never done, and never can be done, while failure to do it is utter discomfiture and death. But in Christ there is liberty. "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." No impossible task weighs down the spirit then—no load of uncancelled guilt remains to be overcome—no long arrearages of indebtedness stand to be made up. The law may curse and threaten, but Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law and rescued us from the power of its cruel dominion. We may be great culprits, but Christ has purchased for us a full release for all our oppressive crimes. And there is now no more condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. Jerusalem that is above, our mother, is *free;* and so all her children are free also—free from a burdensome ritual, free from the curse of the law, free from a burdened conscience, free in our access to God and heaven, free to inherit all the Father hath.

5. *Isaac and Ishmael disagreed.* Isaac claimed all the inheritance, and Ishmael as the elder also claimed it. It is written that Ishmael *mocked* Isaac and *persecuted him.* And so it is: the children of the bondwoman never can agree with the children of promise and of grace. Cain hated Abel, and slew him. The moralist is ever offended with the claims of those who look for salvation only through Christ and grace. The ceremonial Jew cannot tolerate the

preaching of Peter, Paul, and John. The self-righteous Papist is ever armed with fagot and sword against the Husses, Wickliffes, and Luthers of the evangelic faith. Publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of heaven, and those who say prayers seven times a day, and fast three times a week, and give tithes of all that they possess, are thrust out. The lewd publican, lying on his face for very shame at the greatness of his crimes, is justified in preference to the strict Pharisee. This the legalist cannot brook. It galls his self-righteous soul and vexes his proud spirit, and turns his very heart to bitterness and hate, and fires his whole being into persecuting madness. He cannot and will not abide it.

6. But, after all, *Isaac got the inheritance, while Ishmael was cast out.* There is no salvation for man by the covenant of works. People may think to commend themselves to God and to secure a title to heaven by their own good deeds, self-denial, and prayers; but it is a mistake. By the deeds of the law shall no man living be justified. Its requirements are too spiritual and holy and broad and binding for man ever to attain on the basis of having kept them. We may reform and improve and do very well, and think that we have kept the law; but, after we have done our best, "*if any man say he hath no sin he deceiveth himself and the truth is not in him.*" Grace, grace, is our only refuge and our only hope. Without this we are undone for ever. Ishmael may plead and claim and quarrel as he pleases; he never can inherit. His portion is to be cast out and driven away. Sarah's sons alone shall have the promise.

With all our morality and self-righteousness we must come down to the foot of the cross. We must be born of the Spirit, else we cannot be reckoned as Abraham's seed. Mercy, mercy, is our only hope and must be made our only plea. Despising this, our disinheritance is certain. We must come to Jesus, feeling and confessing that all our good deeds can do nothing toward our justification. We are completely hemmed in to this, shut up unto the faith.

Ishmael, it is true, had some consideration shown him. Abraham felt for him and gave him some small presents. The moralist will gain something. He will be respected and honored for his uprightness. The Pharisee has his reward. The man who abstains from vice will save himself many injuries of body and many social degradations. He will have a better standing and a better reputation than the wicked. But, with all his presents, Ishmael got no part of the inheritance. Hagar's seed never entered Canaan. And so the poor legalist, with all his earthly respectability, shall have no part with the saints of God. He must be made over by the Spirit and grace of God or he never can enter heaven. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." All mere morality is a product of the flesh. Even the heathen can be moral. Such goodness is only of the earth, earthy. It is altogether unavailing before God without faith in Christ Jesus. If you would be saved, you must cast all such dependence behind you and count it nothing. You must repent just as if you

were the worst of sinners. You must come relying only on the grace of God.

> "Nothing in my hand I bring,
> Simply to thy cross I cling,"

must be the feeling of your soul. Consider yourself only as poor, guilty, naked, and helpless. Do all the good works you can, but after you have done all say that you are an unprofitable servant, and that on that ground you are entitled to nothing. Murmur not with the elder brother that the prodigal is accepted, but go thou and imitate that prodigal. Arise and go to thy Father, and say unto Him, "Father, I have sinned before Heaven and in Thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son." Go fall down at His feet, and smite thy guilty breast, and cry with the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

And when once you have brought yourself to this, then look up, for your salvation is near. Sarah breaks forth into singing over you as her precious son. Though God was angry with you, His anger is gone from you as you trust in Jesus. And, though you should some time be carried down to Egypt, God will bring His Isaacs and His Josephs back again amid the shoutings of the patriarchs and the rejoicings of angels. Then your peace is made and your inheritance secure. Yea, and though the mountains depart and the hills be removed, yet will God's kindness not depart, nor the covenant of His peace be removed. Thus saith the Lord whose mercy endureth for ever.

But if you are unwilling thus to accept the grace

of the Gospel, let not your false hopes deceive you. If you are unwilling to acknowledge yourself a helpless sinner, and to plead for pardon through Christ alone, you are a mere Ishmael, and will remain an Ishmael, and will have to put up with an Ishmael's portion; which is to be driven out and excluded for ever from the inheritance of the saints.

From this, then, let us learn the deep and radical difference there is between a mere *law* religion and a true *Gospel* piety. It is a good thing to have laws and to have penalties for the violation of good morals; but of this let us be assured, that we cannot legislate people into piety nor save ourselves by a mere legal obedience. A new nature must be born into the soul by the grace and Spirit of God—a legitimate and holy childship which rises above all legal servitude and takes its place in the family of the faithful by the pure grace and free favor of almighty God. And if men will reject the free grace of God, they shall be cast out, and all their *law* religion with them, as Hagar and Ishmael and Esau and the Jews of the Saviour's time.

Let us also learn from this subject the blessedness of our superior privileges. "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of God might be fulfilled in us." Let the law now menace as it will, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." If we are Christians, hoping only through the blood of Christ, and cling only to His cross,

"we are not children of the bond-woman, but of the free." We are not only free from the law's claims and condemnations, but it is itself cast out, hurried away to the wilderness, buried like Egypt's hosts when the Red Sea closed upon them and engulfed them in its depths. There are some Christians who are all the time at work resurrecting those drowned foes, and loading themselves with anxieties and fears on their account—ever calling back Hagar from the wilderness to be oppressed with her burdens and mocked by her sons. But such do but vex themselves unnecessarily. Why torment ourselves with fears of things which have been quite swallowed up in the Saviour's blood? Why terrify our timid souls with dread of foes whom God has graciously overwhelmed? Why waste our peace in bootless servitude with Hagar when our mother is Sarah, or tremble at Sinai's base when the free summit of Jerusalem is ours? Rather, let us shake off the miserable shackles and the thick clay with which we are prone to load ourselves, and rise up in that conscious freedom with which the Son hath made us free.

Fifth Sunday in Lent.

HEB. 9: 11–15: But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? and for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

SOME years ago a number of miners were in one of the coal-pits of the north of England when the top caved in and entirely blocked up the shaft. In a state of semi-suffocation they gathered to the spot where the last remains of unexhausted air could be breathed. Their lamps went out for want of air to support the flame. They had all given up to die, and began singing hymns as they waited for their last in that dreadful cavern. Suddenly one remembered that he had heard of a passage-way between that pit and an old one years before abandoned—a passage long and low, which a man could get through only by

crawling on the ground. For that passage-way they now began to grope and search. They found it and crept through it, and came out at the bottom of the other shaft, and found deliverance from their dungeon. Thus men are entombed in sin and condemnation, and Christ is the only passage-way by which any one can come out to light and life. He is the High Priest, the Mediator, through whom alone we can come to the Father.

Entering, then, upon the treatment of this subject as presented in the text, we observe,

I. There Must be a Priest.

It is not a little significant that all religions are founded on some sort of priesthood. In all ages of the world we read of priests. Long before the days of Moses and Aaron we read of "Melchisedek, priest of the most high God," and after him of Potipherah, priest of On, the father-in-law of Joseph, and then of Jethro, priest of Midian, and then of the long line of Aaron's sons in the economy of the chosen people. Nor need we refer to the hierophants of Egypt, the magi of Babylon and Persia, the sacerdotes of Greece and Rome, the Druids of Western Europe, or the caliphs, muftis, and various religious orders of other nations, to show how universally the idea of priesthood, or attorneyship in sacred things, has pervaded the whole religious life of mankind. It is indeed the great essential in the whole conception of a reconnection of man with God. Man's fallen and sinful condition and the Almighty's sovereign displeasure toward the guilty suggest and require it. As an

offender against the Majesty of heaven man has become corrupt, ignorant, faint, and afraid. He has sunk away from the right knowledge of God and knows no way of return. What spiritual consciousness he has serves only to make him dread an fly the farther from his Maker. On the other hand, God cannot desert His own law or be untrue to His holinesss or look with favor on rebellion against His authority. A righteous sovereign may pity his convicts, but he cannot make common cause with them without overthrowing his character for righteous rule and tarnishing all his throne. Here, then, is awful severance between the sinner and his God. The fallen one goes on sinning, and the wronged Sovereign must go on maintaining his own government Man cannot of himself come to God, and is only terrified when he thinks of having to do with Him; and God cannot deny His own nature by relaxing His laws of eternal justice. The imagination of man is awed and frightened at the terrible majesty of that mysterious Being whom he has provoked by his sins, and conscience cries, "*Let not God speak with us, lest we die.*" Adam seeks to hide himself away from the voice and presence of the Lord whose word he has broken. How, then, shall God and man ever come together? How is there to be *at-one-ment* between them? How shall this wall of separation be passed that man may hopefully come to the light of God's favor? In all the rounds of thought or possibility there is but one way. There must be *a Daysman* to go between the two, that he may lay his hand upon both and thus bring them together. There must be

a priest to officiate for man toward God and for God toward man, and thus open a way of reconciliation, or there never can be salvation.

II. Christ Jesus is a Priest.

This, then, is the great, sublime, and essential office which Christ came to fulfil. More holy than an angel, more divine than a seraph, more deeply pervaded with Godhead than anything that ever took form, and yet more tenderly human than any mere man, the world looked for Him, the ages prophesied of Him, and in the fulness of time God sent Him to open the passage-way between earth and heaven, to bring the unknown God to man's understanding and affection, and to bring man through to divine acceptance and approval. All other priesthoods resolve themselves into this one. So far as they have had any significance, truth, or virtue in them, they have all been only prophecies, types, foreshadowings, or subordinate distributions of this sublime original. Even where Aaron and his sons are the subject, Jesus and His propitiation are the theme.

Christ came into the world with a priestly appointment. We lift our thoughts to the habitations of eternity. Around the awful mount of Almightiness lay the principalities and powers of heaven. Myriads of holy ones, who looked on when the world was made, stood in spirit-throngs to watch the bodying forth of that new thought thrown into their celestial contemplations. The dreadful wheels and wings of cherubim and seraphim rested in waiting for the developments. From the ineffable throne,

out upon the glassy sea radiant in all the glory of Godhead, stepped forth the eternal Son, saying, "*Lo! I come to do thy will, O God!*" "*I will redeem them from death.*" All heaven stood in solemn awe, whilst the Father from His everlasting seat lifted up His hand and said, "*Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek!*" Thus "Christ glorified not Himself to be made an High Priest, but was called of God, as was Aaron."

Christ also entered upon His work through a priestly installation. When Aaron was invested with the Levitical high priesthood the first thing was the washing of him with water. It was the token of that moral cleansing and purity without which no man can see God. And by this ceremonial act he first began to be set apart as the Lord's accepted Priest. From that washing of Aaron we are at once conducted to the baptism of John, who gave it as the great purpose of his mission to make manifest to Israel that blessed Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. He shrank at first from the Saviour's superior greatness, and pronounced it incongruous that a sinful man should be the baptizer of one so sinless and exalted. But when Jesus said, "Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness," John suffered Him, and solemnly washed Him in Jordan as the initial act of His induction into the priestly office. Aaron, washed, was then arrayed in the holy vestments and received upon his head the holy chrism, which ran down upon his beard, even Aaron's beard. And thus was Christ arrayed in all the glories of His everlasting

righteousness when the unction came down upon Him in the sight of men, Christing Him as the Anointed of God and setting Him apart for ever as God's High Priest for the expiation of the sins of a fallen world.

Christ has likewise performed all the great functions of a High Priest. "Every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices." This is the pre-eminent function of his appointment. A priest who fails in this is a priest only in name, and not in reality. "Wherefore it was of necessity that this Man have somewhat also to offer." And He was at once the Offerer and the Offering—the officiating High Priest and the immolated Victim. When Aaron entered on his high priesthood "Moses took blood, and put it on the tip of Aaron's right ear, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot." It was thus that he was perfected for his official work. And so the Captain of our salvation was "made perfect through sufferings." Not "by the blood of goats and of calves, but by His own blood," was He marked. In the hall of judgment the thorny crown was pressed upon His head, imparting to his ears and temples the gory token. On Calvary the nails were driven through His hands and feet and stained them with the crimson drops. On the cross the Victim of the consecration was pierced, His soul and body smitten and severed, and His life yielded up. It was His own act, for He "had power to lay down His life, and He had power to take it again." No man could take it from Him except as He submitted to have it

taken. In Joseph's tomb the spirit of unction mingled with the blood that was spilled, and wrought the final chrism which completed the solemn round of His sublime investiture as the Christ, "able to save unto the uttermost all them that come unto God by Him."

But the mere slaying of the victim was not yet the atonement, but only the foundation and preparation for it. After the sacrifice was made Aaron had to take of the blood, and pass out of the view of the congregation, enter within the veil to the most holy place, and there offer that blood before the awful presence of the divine Majesty. If he lived, that offering was accepted, the sin of the people was covered, God was reconciled, and His loving benediction went forth upon those for whom the propitiation was made. And so Christ, rising up again from death and the grave, presently ascended into heaven, entering into the "more perfect tabernacle not made with hands"—"into heaven itself"—there "to appear in the presence of God for us." Yea, "by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." It was also an availing service, "for if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your consciences from dead works to serve the living God!" He has been accepted in heaven as our High Priest. He lives. He is "ever at the right hand of God, making inter-

cession for us." At-one-ment now is made. The way is open. The voice of condemnation is hushed. The account of sin is cancelled. Reconciliation is complete. And whosoever, in the self-humiliation of penitence and faith, betakes himself to that passage-way from death to life is absolved and for ever free. Thus has Christ effectually performed the functions of the high priesthood for a sinful world, and nothing further remains but for Him to array Himself in gold, purple, and jewels and come forth again to His waiting congregation, when the silver trumpet shall sound, and over all the ransomed earth shall thrill the tidings of the finished work—redemption accomplished, the visions of holy prophets fulfilled, the Year of Jubilee come!

III. Christ is a Priest of "Good Things."

Until He came these "good things" existed only in shadow, in promise, and in hope. The ancient saints tasted of them by anticipation alone. They yet remained to be wrought out into accomplished fact. But what the believers under other dispensations had only in foreshadows and prefigurations, without the realities of the things themselves, we have now, in large measure, as matters of fact and historic accomplishment. The shadows and figures have passed away, and given place to the things to which these types and symbols pointed. The Aaronic priesthood has ceased. It was only the picture of the reality to come—the image of which Christ was the substance. The ancient sacrifices have all disappeared, because that to which they

pointed has come. The only High Priest now is Christ. He has entered upon His office. He fills it at this very hour. Many of the most momentous particulars of its exercise have long since passed into history. The consecration has been perfected. The sacrifice has been slain. Its blood has been borne into the Holy of Holies, and there offered as the propitiation for our sins. God has accepted it, and shown Himself reconciled by means of it. Forgiveness of sins and the taking away of condemnation are now a present and accomplished reality. And for those who have fled for refuge to this hope Jesus is the passage-way to full deliverance. So far, all is reality and no longer mere shadow or promise. The proclamation now is, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." And all this belongs to the "*good things*" procured to us as the fruit and blessing of the precious High Priesthood of our Lord. The succeeding verses show it all included in the apostle's conception of the results flowing from Christ's priestly ministrations. Immense and unspeakable also is the good which is thus already the possession of true believers.

But, with all, the text describes the spiritual treasures of Christ's High Priesthood as "good things *to come*." The presence of the passage-way is blessed, but greater the good to which it leads. Indeed, there is so much more beyond, and our realization of what we already have involves so much

of which futurity alone shall make us conscious, that the whole matter is best described as "*good things to come.*" As Christian believers we have forgiveness now, and every sin or fault is clean blotted out by our Saviour's blood; but who can take it in so perfectly as to enjoy its full blessedness? The way to light and life is open, but as yet we can only crawl on the ground. We need to pass the day of judgment approved ere we come to that largeness of liberty and assured certainty which leaves no shadow of question. God is now our reconciled, true, and loving Father. We believe and know it. We do not doubt it. And yet we need to meet Him in glory, to see His face, to come near to His throne, to hear the gracious tones that welcome to His embrace, before we can feel ourselves completely installed in the bliss of our sonship. We now have liberty of access to Him, and may come with boldness to the throne of grace to obtain mercy for all our sins, help for all our necessities. We now have exemption from the fear and sting of death, but we do not realize this to the full till once we have passed the iron gates and come into the triumphs of the resurrection-life. Thus the main weight and stress of the "good things" of Christ's priestly Mediatorship fall in the future. All present blessings in Christ are but the germs and beginnings of a far more exceeding and eternal consummation. Our going to be with our Lord, our meeting with our dear Redeemer, our seeing Him as He is, our being made like Him in the transforming power of the promised resurrection of our bodies, our coronation

and union with Him as His kings and priests in the glories of an eternal kingdom, our inheritance with Him in the sublime heirship to which He is entitled, —all are "good things to come" which we only reach after the dark passage of our present life is passed.

Oh, that "eternal redemption"! Who shall take the measure of it? Who shall give the inventory of what it includes? Who shall tell the length and breadth and depth and height of a single item of it? What new worlds and new ages are yet required to reveal the fulness of what it embraces! Brethren, "it doth not yet appear what we shall be," but when He who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory. Then shall we come into the world of light and proper life, where there is no more need for flickering lamps or sad songs amid the darkness and the shadow of death. Then shall we reach that Paradise whose flowers have no serpent's trail, whose sod is never cut for graves, whose breezes bear no moans and wails of sorrowing hearts, whose trees of life have no swords of fire to obstruct the passage to their fruits; but where the voice of eternal triumph is, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell among them, and God Himself shall be with them, their God. And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away."

All hail to that bright era of perfected deliverance! Welcome, welcome, thou coronal of time! The weary world waits for thy coming! Millions of

saints stir in the ashes of their waiting and ask, O God, how long? Break, sacred morning—break with thy dewy blessedness! Haste on, ye charioteers of time, and bring the promised consummation! But hold, impatient soul! The time thy God appoints is best. Here are men and women not yet ready for that day. They have been hearing of Christ and His great works of suffering love and intercession from earliest childhood until now; but they have let it lie unused in their memory. They have heard the chants and songs in celebration of His birth. They have listened to the story of His life and deeds. They have looked upon the tragic scenes of His passion. They have been certified of His resurrection, His ascension into heaven, and the character of His ministrations and institutes to impart to men salvation through His blood. They know that they are sinful beings, afraid of God, afraid of death, afraid of the day of judgment, and that there is no way of safety but in the mediation of this only High Priest for our fallen world. They have been admonished, exhorted, entreated, and warned again and again. Betimes they are almost persuaded, and promise themselves that they will attend to these great matters; but they are unprepared to die, though death's dark and suffocating shadows are gathering ever closer and closer around them. Once more they hear of the low passage-way left for their escape, that, betaking themselves in self-prostration before the High Priest of good things to come, they may still get out to light and life. God help them to the blessed deliverance!

Palm Sunday.

PHIL. 2: 5–11: Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

THE apostle here speaks of "the mind" which was in Christ as our Redeemer, and urges that we all, as His disciples, should copy the same in our lives and conduct. And in order to give us a full insight into this "mind" he proceeds to describe three things:

I. CHRIST'S MEDIATORIAL CHARACTER;
II. CHRIST'S MEDIATORIAL WORK;
III. CHRIST'S MEDIATORIAL GLORY.

To these important particulars, then, let us direct our attention as time may serve, praying God to help us lay hold on them with a faith that admits of no doubt or question.

I.

As to the mediatorial character of our Lord, nobody that saw Him doubted that He was really a man. He was born as a man, grew as a man, lived as a man, hungered and thirsted as a man, prayed as a man, and died as a man. But that He was infinitely more than a man, and the true Son of eternal Deity, was not so manifest to every one's eyes. Yet such He was. According to the Creed, "The right faith is, that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and man; God, of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds, and man, of the substance of His mother, born in the world: perfect God and perfect man." Nor need we go farther than this text to prove it conclusively to every one agreed to accept inspiration as authority. For, whatever critics may make of the apostle's language, there still is an assertion of Christ's existence prior to His Incarnation, and that there was with that pre-existence an inherent right to equality with God.

We may not be able to explain it. The universe may contain nothing else like it. It may stand for ever as an impenetrable mystery to men and angels. But it is inevitably embraced in the true Christian faith, and stands as the great foundation-stone on which the whole edifice of our salvation is built. And so vital is it to all our hopes of eternal life that, except a man believe it faithfully and keep it whole and undefiled, he cannot be a right Christian or come to that salvation which is proclaimed in the Gospel of Christ.

It is of the utmost moment to us, therefore, to have our minds clear, settled, and established respecting this great point of the faith, lest after all we should miss the unspeakable boon which the Creator has provided for us in our lost and condemned condition.

And that full conviction and belief may not be wanting touching this fundamental article, God has spread the evidences of it all over His Word and in all variety of forms, so that if we are at all willing and anxious to come to the knowledge of the truth as He has laid it down for our acceptance, we cannot fail to reach it. Certainly, all the names of God, all the attributes of God, all the works of God, and all the honors of God are continually ascribed to Jesus Christ the same as to the Father and to the eternal Spirit; and from such a showing the conclusion inevitably follows that He was God.

Bible names always denote realities. We may misapply names, but the Holy Ghost can make no such mistakes. What God calls God must be God. And yet the Bible knows no name of God which is not applied to Jesus Christ, who was born at Bethlehem and crucified on Calvary. Isaiah prophesied of Him as a child born, a son given. Here was humanity. But it is immediately added, "And His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father;" which is nothing less than Deity. In another place the same prophet describes a vision of One whom the seraphims worshipped, saying, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;" which the apostle John says was

a vision of Christ's glory (John 12 : 41). Of this child born into the world the Psalmist sung, and the Epistle to the Hebrews quotes as applying to Him, "Unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." Concerning that Jesus who lived and walked among men the apostle John says that He was *the Word*, which was in the beginning with God, and *was God*, though made flesh and dwelling among us. Even the skeptical and unbelieving Thomas from the depth of his conviction was compelled to acknowledge this same once-crucified Jesus as verily his Lord and his God. Him who, as concerning the flesh, came of the Jews, Paul declares to be "over all *God* blessed for ever" (Rom. 9 : 5). Inquire we of Him "who maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night, and calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the earth? JEHOVAH is His name." And yet that righteous Branch which the Lord was to raise up unto David for the saving of Israel was to be called, and hence to be, "JEHOVAH our Righteousness." Jesus Himself joined His own name with the name of the Father and the Holy Ghost, as coequal with them, in the initiation of men into the fellowship of His Church and salvation. "The Lord of glory," "the Lord from heaven," "the Alpha and Omega," "the Amen," "God manifest in the flesh," "the true God and eternal life,"—are all designations of Deity, and they are all applied to the man Christ Jesus. He must therefore needs be a God-man.

The essential attributes of God must evidence eter-

nal Deity. But these also are everywhere ascribed to the Lord Jesus. *Eternity* is ascribed to Him, for of that very Word which was made flesh and dwelt among us it is said, "His goings forth have been of old, from everlasting;" "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever;" "In the beginning was the Word." He says of Himself, "Before Abraham was, I am;" "I am the First and the Last." *Omnipresence* is ascribed to Him. Paul speaks of Him as "ascended up far above all heavens, that He might *fill all things*." He says of Himself, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world;" "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." *Omniscience* is ascribed to Him. "Thou knowest all things;" "Now we are sure that thou knowest all things," said His adoring disciples. Paul testifies of Christ that "in Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge"—that "in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." *Omnipotence* is ascribed to Him. He claimed that He had power on earth to forgive sins; that "all power in heaven and earth" was in His hands; that He could command all the legions of eternity to His defence; that He had "power to lay down His life, and to take it again;" that His enemies should see Him "sitting on the right hand of power" and coming "with power and great glory." Paul declares Him "the head of all principality and power," "able to subdue all things unto Himself," having a name to which all knees must bow, and all creatures in the universe confess that He is Lord. John writes of that same Jesus who appeared to him

in Patmos, "I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, THE ALMIGHTY." *Immutability* is ascribed to Him: "Jesus Christ, the same, yesterday, and to-day, and for ever;" the Father saith unto the Son, "Thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail." In the very spirit of heaven John ascribes to Him "glory and dominion for ever and ever." And whatever perfections or attributes pertain to the Godhead, Paul affirms that they dwell in Jesus in all their fulness. How could this be if that meek man of Nazareth was not also very God?

And so, again, if the peculiar *works of God* are competent to evidence "eternal power and Godhead," the same are all, without the slightest reservation, ascribed to Him who is called Jesus the Christ. Is *creation* the work of God? It is written of that same Word which was made flesh and dwelt among us, "All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made;" that "the world was made by Him;" that "by Him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions or principalities or powers, all things were created by Him and for Him" (Col. 1: 16, 17). Is *Preservation* the work of God? Yet of Jesus it is written, "He is before all things, and by Him all things consist;" "He upholdeth all things by the word of His power." Is the *Raising of the dead* the peculiar work of God? Of Jesus it is testified, "As the Father raiseth the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom

He will" (John 5 : 21). He says of Himself, "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of death and Hades;" "the hour is coming when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live;" "All that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth;" "every one that believeth Him I will raise up at the last day." Is *the Final Judgment* the work of God? It is written, "God Himself is Judge." And yet the inevitable decree is that "we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every man may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad;" "the Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son;" "He hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man;" "the Lord Jesus shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and kingdom." And if there be any other works pertaining to eternal Godhead, Jesus says, "What things soever the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise." How could all this be if Jesus the man were not also at the same time God?

And in like manner, if the rendering, accepting, and appropriating of *the honors of God* can be adduced to prove divine dignity and glory, the same occurs abundantly in the case of Jesus Christ. Reason, conscience, and Revelation concur in the doctrine that supreme homage and worship belong only to eternal Godhead. The first and greatest precept of the law is, "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me;" "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and

Him only shalt thou serve." And yet twenty times in the New Testament do we find inspired men and holy saints imploring grace, mercy, and peace from Jesus Christ, the same as from the Father and the Holy Ghost. The adorable Name into which we are all to be baptized as the children of God embraces that of the Son coequally with the Father and the Holy Ghost. The wise men so honorably mentioned in the beginning of the Gospel came to "worship Him." "They that were in the ship" that floundered amid the winds and waves of Genesareth "came and worshipped Him." Thomas adoringly acknowledged Him as his Lord and his God. They that saw Him ascend from Olivet "worshipped Him." Stephen, full of the Holy Ghost and shining with the preradiance of heaven, committed his departing soul to Him, and prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." He Himself declared it to be the will of God "that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father." When the Father "bringeth the First-begotten into the world, He saith, Let all the angels of God worship Him." The text declares Him possessed of "a Name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." And hence His own word must ever hold good as one of the essential principles of Christianity, that "He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father." Even in heaven itself John saw and heard the living ones and elders falling

down before the Lamb that had been slain, and saying in holiest adoration, "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof, for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood;" whilst the voice of myriads of angels with them poured out the lofty anthem, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing;" "and every creature which is in heaven" cried out in adoring song of "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, *and unto the Lamb for ever and ever!*" This is as high as it is possible for worship to go, and it is all given alike to Jesus as to God.

When the priests of Jupiter brought their oxen and garlands to the gates of Lystra to sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas, whom they mistook for gods come down among men, the holy apostles "rent their clothes and ran in among the people, crying out in horror, Sirs, why do ye these things? We are men of like passions with you." When John fell down before the angel of the Apocalypse, whom he mistook for a divine being, the heavenly one instantly checked and rebuked it, saying, "See thou do it not, for I am thy fellow-servant and of thy brethren the prophets." How then could such holy worship and honor have been given to Christ, or accepted by Him, unless indeed He be God and entitled to it by virtue of the divine nature that was and is and ever will be in Him?

What if it is a mystery? What is not a mystery? Man is a mystery; life is a mystery; death is a mys-

tery; everything is a mystery. And if we propose to set aside all mysteries, then we must set aside all that is, ourselves and our own existence with the rest. Yea, and the universal mystery of things is all the more mysterious and unsearchable without this evident "mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." Even the historical facts of Christ's own earthly history refuse all explanation apart from the great foundation-fact that He was and is the Son of God as well as the son of man.

He came into the world a swaddling infant, was nursed on a woman's breast, and grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man. Here was a true human being. But He was born of the woman alone; the glory of heaven shone about His birthplace; the angels sung *Gloria in Excelsis* over His manger-cradle; the stars in their courses chronicled the time and place and dignity of His advent for the Eastern sages; and sacred prophecy and song broke forth in transcendent testimony to His superhuman character. As a man we behold Him approaching Jordan's waters to be baptized for the fulfilling of all righteousness; and as a sublime inhabitant of heaven the sky opens over Him, the Holy Ghost comes visibly upon Him, and a voice from the heights of eternity thunders, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." As a man He wanders up and down among the hills and villages of Palestine, poor, hungry, thirsty, wearied, and having not where to lay His head; and yet He strews

His path with works of wonder, healing the sick, cleansing the lepers, casting out devils, raising the dead, speaking as never man spake—as a very plenipotent from the throne of God. As a man He is oppressed and exhausted with the labors of the day, retires to the solitudes for prayer and rest; and then comes walking on the waves, stills them for His affrighted disciples, and lifts up the sinking Peter, as the great Master of the elements as well as the Lord of men. As a man He comes weeping to the grave of His friend Lazarus; and then calls him forth from the putrescence of the tomb as the very Prince and Giver of life. He comes hungering to the fig tree seeking fruit as a man; and then withers it away with a word like a God. Nailed to the cross, bleeding and dying as a man, He opens the doors of Paradise to the poor sufferer that hangs by His side as God of the living and the dead. Mangled, dead, and buried as a man, the third day He takes life again, bursts out from the sealed sepulchre, and sallies forth in immortal powers as the divine Master of death and hell. On the shores of Galilee He sits down with His disciples to eat broiled fish and honey as a man; and then leads them to the summit of Olivet, and visibly ascends up out of their sight to the right hand of eternal Majesty as the rightful Sovereign of the highest worlds. Was there ever such another history as this? In all the rounds of possibility is there anything to explain or construe such facts except on the admission that "the right faith is, that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and man"?

And only as we accept and take in this can we fully understand either the admonition or the facts set forth in the text. It is only as we present to ourselves "the glory which He had with the Father before the world was," and contemplate Him from eternity as the effulgence of the Father's glory, the very image of the Father's substance, and upholding all things by the word of His power, that we can at all comprehend what that "Being in the form of God," and by eternal right of nature "on an equality with God," were, or what is the meaning of His not having grasped and held on to it, "but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men." And without this we cannot begin to estimate the length and breadth and depth of that humiliation before which the apostle stands in such astonishment and wonder, or of that self-sacrifice which he holds forth for our imitation.

II.

We stand to-day within the margin of that Holy Week which by common consent commemorates the awful Passion of our Saviour. The intention is that we should survey what He endured for the world's redemption, and put ourselves in sympathy with the facts and in accord with the mind and spirit which induced and pervaded the mysterious transaction. And to this end has this day's Epistle been constructed and selected. And when the apostle exhorts, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus," he brings us to the margin of

the Passion history and proceeds to lay open to us a sketch of its transcendent facts.

First of all, he would have us see and know that that Passion and self-sacrifice began in heaven. All our Saviour's sufferings on earth, considered only as a man, are not to be compared with His self-abnegation in heaven as the Son of God. There He lived and reigned in the glory of Godhead from all eternity. Being God, He was "in the form of God." But this He laid aside and ceased to appear as God. He still was God all the same, as much when He lay in Bethlehem's manger and died on Calvary's cross, as when He laid the foundations of the world or placed its topstone amid the songs of the morning stars; but the form of it, the exhibition of Himself in the majesty which pertains to Deity, He submerged in a servant's work and attitude. There, and by right of His Deity, He was "on an equality with God;" which, indeed, He never ceased to be according to His Deity, but which He was not so eager to clutch and hold as to hinder Him from taking a service and position as if He were nothing but a weak, dependent, and sorrowing man. Therefore, as low as earth is beneath heaven and man is below God was the stretch and extent of that condescension and self-sacrifice which the Son of God underwent before ever He appeared in our world. From innocence to condemnation as a malefactor—from the freedom of life to death on the cross—were by no means so great a humiliation as that from "the form of God" to "the form of a servant," and from rightful equality with God to the condition and likeness

of man. Yet this was the mind that was in Christ Jesus when He undertook the work of human redemption. His prenatal sacrifices transcended even those which He submitted to as a man. The Incarnation itself was the great primal wonder in the case, upon which, above all, the mind must be fixed to comprehend the amazing magnitude of our dear Saviour's condescension to redeem us.

But "being found in fashion as a man," a still further history of astounding humiliation ensued.

He humbled Himself to a life of obedience. The Lord and Maker of the law, He put Himself under the law, the same as any mere man is under the law. Its precepts He had to keep. Its ceremonies He had to observe. Its righteousness He had to fulfil. And all its requirements He had to obey, without flaw or fault, in heart or life, from infancy to death. As no other man had ever kept the law He had to keep it, and did keep it; so that at the end of His earthly life He could triumphantly challenge men and devils to convict Him of any taint of sin. He encountered all Satan's temptations, and He vanquished them. He was beset with traitors, spies, and murderers, and tried at every step by the hot malignities of men and devils, but He came forth from the crucible as pure gold. He was among men as other men, the friend of publicans and sinners, but in all things, from first to last, He was holy, harmless, undefiled, the Lamb of God without spot or blemish. In letter and in spirit, in heart and life, He fulfilled all that the law requires of humanity or that pertained to Him as the world's Prophet and

Exemplar. Here was a further humiliation at which we may well stand amazed.

But His self-humbling obedience went to still deeper depths. He came to answer for the world's sins, as well as to set it an example of holiness and show it the way of life. There was an awful curse to be endured and exhausted before any sinner could go free. His mission as the Christ required His obedient submission to that curse. His life had to be given up as an offering and propitiation for the sins of those whom He was sent to redeem. And He did not draw back even from this, though it filled His soul with agony which turned His sweat to blood as He came to drink that cup. To all the rest of His amazing humiliation He "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." The God-man submitted to be made a curse for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. And only as we contemplate the divine equal of the eternal Father coming down from the sublime heights of His inalienable Godhead, appearing in fashion as a man and humbling Himself to a life of obedience and an accursed death, are we let into that mind which was in Christ Jesus, and which it is for us as His followers to copy into ourselves.

III.

But, descending with Him in His humiliation, we may also ascend with Him in His exaltation. Because of His self-sacrifice and obedience unto death "God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name; that at the name

of Jesus every knee should bow, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord."

The Apostles' Creed describes five particulars or stages in the exaltation of Christ as the God-man our Redeemer: His descent into hell, not to suffer its torments, but to display and herald His victory; His resurrection from the dead; His ascension into heaven; His session at the right hand of the Father in regal glory and authority; and His coming in triumph and judicial power to put down all His enemies and to raise His people to participation with Himself in a kingdom of glory without end. The apostle here sums it all up in honor and dominion as the mountain-summits of His exaltation. Though dead, He did not remain dead. Though in mortal flesh, that flesh did not remain mortal. Though tarrying for forty days on earth, He did not remain on earth. Though He had an historic name among men, it was a name that many cast out as evil, trample, and despise in a way which cannot continue. And when all came to all, so high was the exaltation that no name in heaven or earth or under the earth is now so high as His name, or which any creature in the universe is not under obligation to confess as that of the Lord of the worlds as well as the King of grace and salvation.

The world has many great names—names which shook all the casements of human society and shaped the channels of human history—names which have been mighty after the lapse of ages since their wearers passed away,—but not one of them is to be mentioned by the side of that of Jesus. Not

with sword to plough it into the hearts of nations, but with all the quiet gentleness of the incoming spring or the rising of the sun, it has entered into the deepest soul of humanity, transformed its life, lifted it into celestial fellowships, and so inwrought itself into the affections of mankind that millions on millions to-day would cheerfully surrender their bodies to be burned rather than let go their loving interest in it. What myriads on myriads in all the earth call themselves by that name, and cherish it as the greatest, sweetest, best ever given under heaven among men! What temples and trophies and votive offerings have the ages devoted to it! What toils, what sacrifices, what martyrdoms, what unceasing services, what willing sufferings in life and death, have men gladly endured for the sake of that name! What talismanic power has it upon the hearts of the sinsick, the sorrowing, the persecuted, and the dying! Of what hymns and songs and liturgies and worshipping congregations and thrilling eloquence is it the life and inspiration! The mind swims, the intellect reels and staggers, as we try to grasp a full idea of what that name is, and has done, and is doing, and must do, in this vast world of ours. Verily, it *is* above every name, and destined to ever-higher potency as the ages roll.

But the earth is not half its theatre. It is known to all heaven, and acknowledged there with a holier and more universal rapture than ever it has received in this world, or can receive until that prayed-for time when things shall be on earth as they are in heaven. Great names are in heaven, and mighty

names—names of seraphim and cherubim—names of angels and archangels—names of principalities and powers—names of being that has burned and blazed and wrought in transcendent potency and glory before the throne of God ere earth and time began, and will do the same for all time to come. But among them all there is no name so high, so great, so glorious, so imperishable in its sublimity, as the name of Jesus. Of all that are in heaven, whether they be thrones, dominions, principalities, or powers, there is not one but bows the knee in lowly reverence and adoration to the Lamb that was slain.

> They praise Him now, their hearts and voices praise,
> And swell the rapture of the glorious song.

In unbroken symphonies to His name the choral anthems pour, "loud as from numbers without number, and sweet as from blest voices uttering joy."

And yet there are creatures on this earth, and under it, who only despise and blaspheme that name. But it matters not for His dominion. All power in heaven and earth is His, and they that disdain to bow the knee to Him, or refuse to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord in loving allegiance to His redeeming grace and power, will find themselves at last compelled to acknowledge and confess Him amid the terrors of His inexorable judgments. By the gift and appointment of the Father, and to the glory of eternal Godhead, it is their bounden duty to honor and confess Him now. To this end He went through the depths of His humiliation and hath been consti-

tuted both Lord and Christ. And His rightful dues He will yet demand. To this end "all judgment is committed to the Son." And when once the car of His vengeances moves, such a crashing among the ranks of His foes shall come that no men or devils will have it in their power to withhold their unwilling confession that He is Lord.

Such honor and dominion hath God the Father given and decreed to His Son as our Mediator and King.

See, then, what sublime honors He sets upon the humble mind and the self-sacrificing heart. Beyond all comprehension was the self-humiliation of Jesus to redeem poor fallen man. But it was no loss to Him. It opened the doors of salvation to a lost world, and it laid the foundations of a kingdom of which He is Head, which must grow and expand till all creatures acknowledge and honor it.

That kingdom now exists. In that kingdom we are called to be citizens. It is a kingdom of present self-sacrifice and humble obedience, but which brings to immortal honors at the last. The spirit of that kingdom is the mind which was in Christ Jesus, and its immunities are the royal protection of its King and a share with Him in His glory. And the terms of fellowship in that kingdom are the humble bowing of the knee to the name of Jesus, and the honest and willing confession of Him as our Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Dear friends, "ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty

might be rich." What profit have you made of your knowledge and sublime opportunity? How far has the mind that was in Him been made living and active in your temper and spirit? How far have His wonderful history and passion served to affect and shape your doings and your lives? What power has His Name to move and control your hearts? Have you learned to bow the knee to Him and to confess and serve Him as your Lord and Helper? Shall it be that the God-man gave Himself for you, and you have nothing in return for Him? Where, then, is your hope and your salvation?

O that story of the cross, of the Son of God made man and crucified for our redemption! What heart should it not melt! What soul should it not bring to contrition and penitence! What tongue should it not unloose for the confession of Jesus as its Lord! What man, woman, or child should it not bring to willing and glad submission to so good and gracious a Saviour! What better or more fitting thing can any human being do than to kneel before His altar in devout acknowledgment of His sovereign right to all we have and are, and there to vow everlasting allegiance to His name?

O Jesus! King most wonderful!
Thou Conqueror renowned!
Thou Sweetness most ineffable,
In whom all joys are found!—

Thee may our tongues for ever bless;
Thee may we love alone;
And ever in our lives express
The image of Thine own.

Holy Thursday.

1 Cor. 11 : 23–32 (Revised Version) : For I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, how that the Lord Jesus in the night in which he was betrayed took bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, This is my body, which is for you: this do in remembrance of me. In like manner also the cup, after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood: this do, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat the bread or drink the cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man prove himself, and so let him eat of the bread, and drink of the cup. For he that eateth and drinketh, eateth and drinketh judgment unto himself, if he discern not the body. For this cause many among you are weak and sickly, and not a few sleep. But if we discern ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.

THE darkest night in the history of Christ was the night before He died upon the cross. It was the night of His last interview with His disciples while in mortal flesh. It was the night of His great agony in the garden. It was the night in which one of His own chosen friends and disciples betrayed Him into the hands of His enemies. It was the night on which a ruffian mob seized Him, and dragged Him prisoner to a mock trial, and subjected Him to all sorts of cruelty, humiliation, and disgrace. But in nothing

was that night rendered more memorable than by that act of love and mercy which gave us the holy sacrament of the Supper. So important has the Church ever regarded that sacred institution of our religion that she has, from time immemorial, devoted this day before the anniversary of the Lord's death to the commemoration of the giving of it. Both the Gospel and Epistle Lessons appointed for to-day refer directly to it. In the Epistle especially is it set out for our contemplation, with directions for its use and admonitions against its abuse. Nor can we better prepare ourselves for a profitable celebration of it than by carefully considering what the holy apostle here sets before us. A thorough discussion of the subject is, of course, out of the question and would hardly be in place, but certain points respecting it are presented which it may be of good service for us to note. To this, then, may God help us!

1. The first thing that strikes us on looking at this ordinance is its extreme *simplicity*. As some celebrate it, it is a very gorgeous ceremonial and an imposing spectacle; but as Christ Himself gave it, and administered it with His own hands, nothing could be more simple. A few fragments of ordinary Passover bread and a sip of the common product of the grape, reverently taken, eaten and drunk, made up the whole observance. The Saviour took bread, and when He had given thanks He brake it, and said to His disciples, Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new testa-

ment in my blood; this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till He come. This was the entire thing as He instituted it and as it was administered by Himself. It would be difficult to conceive anything more plain and simple. It is so homely and so severely unadorned that men have ever shown a superstitious and unwholesome itching to invest it with showy demonstrations and loud ritualism, such as the Saviour never appointed, and which is foreign to the whole nature of the sacrament itself.

2. The next thing we notice is its great *sacredness*. It is Christ's own institution, to which above all other things He committed the perpetuation of His memory among men as the supreme memorial of Himself and His death to the end of time. He has identified Himself with it as He has not with any other appointment, and rested on it for the living perpetuation of Himself on earth after He was gone. The precise character of its institution He caused to be specifically recorded by three of the evangelists, and afterward made a special revelation of the same to Paul as the great apostle to the Gentiles. Paul was not one of the original disciples. He had never seen Christ in the flesh. But he did see the risen and glorified Christ, and received directly from Him not only the office of dispensing the Gospel, but the Gospel itself, and with it the details respecting the Lord's Supper. Nor is there anything that more strongly shows the intensely sacred importance of this ordinance than the simple fact that the Lord

Jesus in heaven communicated it so circumstantially to St. Paul that he might give it to the churches which he founded, and be able to say that he had received it not from men, but of the Lord Himself. If it were not a thing of most sacred divine appointment, of most vital importance to the Church, and meant for the most scrupulous and devout observance of all Christians in all time, it is utterly unexplainable why there should have been this special and circumstantial revelation of it to this apostle long after its great Author had departed out of the world.

We may therefore be perfectly sure that in observing this ordinance we are not only complying with the will and direction of our Saviour, but that we are at the same time attending to something of most sacred worth and importance in the Christian system. How some can make light of it, neglect it, or altogether reject it from their way of serving the Lord, and yet consider themselves accepted Christians in the face of the facts in the case, is more than lies in my power to see or understand. They cut out of Christianity the very thing which Jesus has most emphasized in all the appointments of His Gospel. Whatever else they may do, they certainly do not remember Him, nor proclaim His death, nor eat His body, nor drink His blood, nor maintain fellowship and communion with Him in the way which He has ordained as the most special and pre-eminent method and means of so doing.

3. Another thing we note in this institution is that it is *a genuine sacrament.* The Scriptures do not so

call it, but they assign to it all that is embraced in what theologians have summed up in that word.

A sacrament is an outward visible sign, divinely appointed to convey, impart, and seal an invisible and saving grace. To the constitution of a sacrament, in its true sense, there must be (1) an external, material, and tangible element to serve as a sign or token to the outward senses; (2) a divine authority for the use of that element in a particular service; (3) a clear divine appointment of such use of it as a standing enactment running parallel with the dispensation to which it belongs; (4) a specific divine promise or pledged gift of grace and spiritual good in the prescribed use of that element, so that by means of it and by being wrapped up in it on God's authority that grace or spiritual good is presented, offered, declared, applied, and sealed to the right recipient.

And precisely such a thing is the Lord's Supper, which the apostle received by direct revelation from Christ Himself. The earthly, visible, material, outward elements are bread and wine—literal bread and wine—which never cease from their natural qualities of bread and wine, and which are the sign and token to the natural senses. These elements are designated and chosen by divine authority and appointment to be used in a particular sacred service. There is a clear and standing divine appointment for the use of these elements in this service requiring the doing of it—the doing of it "often"—the doing of it for the whole period of the dispensation—till the coming again of the Maker of the appointment. There is a

specific assurance, promise, and pledge of a gift of grace and spiritual good in the prescribed use of these elements—to wit, the giving of Christ's body broken for us, the giving of His blood shed for us, the commemoration of Him as the Sacrifice for our sins, and the proclaiming of His sacrificial death until He comes; so that, on the authority and appointment of the Lord Jesus Christ, His broken body and His shed blood, and all that goes with the same as the procuring cause of our forgiveness and standing as pardoned and justified men and women, are here presented, offered, declared, applied, and sealed to every one observing the ordinance according to its intention.

The Lord's Supper is thus a true and most precious *sacrament*—a sacred divine institution by which the Fountain of life and the Bread of heaven, in, with, and under the outward forms of natural bread and wine, presents and gives His whole undivided Self to us as the sacrifice for our sins and as the spiritual food and aliment by which our souls and bodies are nourished unto eternal life. How He does this we do not know and are not called on to explain. He who possesses all power in heaven and earth can be at no loss to make His proposal, pledge, and promise good. All that we need to know is that the bread is bread and that the wine is wine, and that in the use of them in this ordinance, with the bread and wine as the external vehicles, He does give us His body to eat and His blood to drink as the very life and substance of our eternal salvation.

This spiritual good is not the dead Christ, His

dead body and blood, but the living Christ, His living body and blood—the same, indeed, that experienced death on Calvary's cross, but living and abiding in glory everlasting. There is no ubiquity of the flesh and blood of Christ in that external and physical sense in which He was massacred on Calvary. The whole thing is according to that higher sense in which He "through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God," and "entered in once into the holy place," "by His own blood having obtained eternal redemption for us." It is that all-meritorious bloodshedding and obedience unto death perpetuated in the majesty of His glorified and divine estate in which He lives, ministers, and reigns in the glory of eternal dominion, which He thus presents, gives, and seals unto us for our preservation in soul and body unto everlasting life.

Nor is it Christ's body and blood in such form that it is to be masticated with our teeth and digested as carnal food; but in the form accordant to the nature of that inward life and kingdom which is the pulsation of His ever-living Self and ever-active mediatorial power, and in which standeth our salvation The bread and wine are not *trans*substantiated into His body and blood, neither are they *con*substantiated with His body and blood; but by His ordination and divine majesty and power the bread and wine are made the material vehicles for conveying, imparting, and sealing to us that spiritual good and grace which inhere in His glorified Self, whose body was broken and whose blood was shed for us, and for many, for the remission of sins; so that the

bread which we break and the cup of blessing which we bless become to us the medium of fellowship and communication with the body and blood of our Lord, who lives and reigns as our great High Priest upon His throne, at once the Sacrifice, the Sacrificer, and the sovereign Dispenser, for the redemption of His people.

There is, therefore, no higher or more blessed good to man than that which Christ has arranged and appointed and pledged to give, impart, and seal unto us in the Holy Supper. Men in their grovelling conceptions and inveterate unbelief may cry out with the disputers at Capernaum, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" But to all such carping the answer of the Saviour ever is, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed" (John 6:52–56). And the highest, most literal, and all-inclusive form of eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Saviour unto eternal life is that which is accomplished in the right observance of the mystic Eucharistic Supper. It is the very sacrament of our spiritual life and eternal salvation.

4. Accordingly, also, the apostle further remarks upon *the sin and danger of improper dealing with this important institution.* A sacrament so sacred in its character and so marvellous in its composition demands a kind and degree of comprehension, discern-

ment, and solemnity in the handling of it the absence of which must needs be of serious disadvantage. It is the sacrament of the Lord's body and blood, given as the aliment of all spiritual life and standing with God, and to partake of or treat it without a devout and believing recognition of this fact—"not discerning the Lord's body," not distinguishing what it presents, offers, and carries, and what renders it different from all other eating and drinking however religiously done—is to incur a peculiar sin, to make one's self "guilty of the body and blood of the Lord;" that is, participant in the crime of those who crucified Him, and so to come under special condemnation and judgment. An irreverent and unworthy communicant not only loses entirely all the benefits of the sacrament, but involves himself in peculiar crime—not final "damnation," as the word is in our version, but in a particular *condemnation* or judgment, as the original signifies and the old meaning of *damnatio* is.

These Corinthians had greatly abused this sacrament. They had irreverently linked it on to their somewhat disorderly love-feasts, not at all apprehending its peculiar nature and seriousness. The result was, that they were judged for it and made to suffer because of their lack of discernment and faith. "For this cause," the apostle tells them, "many are weakly and sickly among you, and many sleep." They were not only weakly, sickly, and in some cases dead in their Christian life and experience, but they were under a special judgment, which broke in upon their bodily health, put them under physical infirmities

and afflictions, and caused the untimely death of many, which would not have been but for their offending in this particular. The sacrament itself is for the preserving of soul and body unto everlasting life by the ministration of the body and blood of the Lord to the participant; and by their perversion of it into an ordinary eating and drinking, and their irreverent partaking of it without discerning what it contained and was to be to them, they harmed both their souls and their bodies, and had leanness, sickness, and death as the consequence of their temerity and profaneness. They suffered temporal judgments because of their sin in using the Lord's Supper without knowing or apprehending what it was with which they were dealing.

There is undoubtedly a vital connection between moral and physical evil. Men may indeed suffer without being guilty, and they may be guilty and not suffer for the time being; but there is an inner law which connects the two somewhere at some time. Many may eat and drink of the Lord's Supper in true faith, and still have bodily affliction; and many may eat and drink very unworthily, and still have no marks of sickness or disease; but it is in the nature of the one to give healing and life, and of the other to inflict suffering and death; and the same is ever likely to be the ultimate effect in every case. It was so among these Corinthians, and there is reason to believe that it is so still in more cases than we dream. One thing, however, is clear: that unworthy and improper dealing with the Lord's Supper involves in special guilt, condemnation, and judgment, just as a

right reception of it gives and imparts a special and heavenly good, to the nourishment and preservation of both soul and body unto everlasting life.

5. It only remains for us, then, to note *the preparation requisite to a right communion* to which the apostle alludes. So solemn and sacred an ordinance plainly calls for a sober and serious mind in approaching it. A service in remembrance of Christ, and instituted to proclaim His death for our sins, requires the collection and concentration of our thoughts and hearts upon the subject of the commemoration and the nature of the proclamation. An ordinance divinely framed and appointed to convey, impart, and seal to us the very sacrifice of Christ, and its whole meritorious and living avail for our salvation, certainly needs to be rightly apprehended in order to partake of it and profit by it according to its nature and intent. If we do not believe in the Saviour whom it brings before us; if we do not acknowledge His sacrificial death for our sins; if we do not rest for our forgiveness in the breaking of His body and the shedding of His blood which it sets forth; if we have no apprehension or discernment of the reality or confidence in the truth that our Lord Jesus Christ does herein present, give, impart, and seal unto us His living and glorified Self as the Sacrifice for our sins and the life and food of our souls and bodies unto eternal salvation,—we surely are in no condition properly and profitably to join in the celebration of such a sacrament. Hence the apostle says, "Let a man examine [*prove*] himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup."

And what is this proving of ourselves but for each one to bring himself to the test whether he be a believer in the Person whom the ordinance calls to mind, in the sacrificial death of that Person for the remission of sins which the ordinance proclaims, and in the ordinance itself as the means whereby the all-glorious Author of it really and truly gives and makes over to us that very sacrifice and His whole Self as our present and all-sufficient Lord and Saviour. In other words, each one must test, judge, discriminate, and discern himself, whether or not he is such a believer in what he here proposes to do and receive, and whether his mind and belief are thus in accord with the nature, meaning, and office of the institution.

When a man has thus judged himself, and is thus in heart and mind adjusted to the sacrament which he proposes to celebrate, the way is clear and open, and he can come with every liberty and confidence of an approved and welcome guest. There is nothing, then, to deter any one from coming—no judgment to fear, no condemnation to apprehend. Nay, if we be thus in the faith, it is the staying away that incurs condemnation, because it is a neglect of a most important and precious privilege and a disobedience to a plain and positive command. Not to use the highest sacrament of our religion must disable faith and damage true devotion. Christian life without it is sickly and weak, and in most instances must needs die. We all need this ordinance, and there is nothing like the right use of it to tone us up in our piety and to quicken us in soul and body to the life

of faith. We are all unworthy of it, but our good and gracious Lord, in the midst of the traitorous proceedings to put Him to death, thought upon the needs of His people, and instituted this holy sacrament to help our infirmities, to steady and sustain our faith and love, and the better to assure and enrich our souls and bodies with the treasures of His grace.

Many hearts tremble as they contemplate the spread table of the Lord, and timidly shrink in questionings whether they can adventure in safety. But the word of the Master here, as in so many other cases, is, "Fear not; only believe;" "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in Me;" "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out."

Our unbelief and unfaithfulness in time past may deserve that we should feel these trials of doubt and perplexity. It may be God's just chastening for our lack of earnestness and devotion. Certainly, we have all merited worse than we have received. But it is not meant to condemn us and drive us away that we are thus thrown under cloud and scruple. It is mercifully meant to set us right, that we may not be condemned with the unbelieving world. It is not to keep us back, but to bring us forward in fitter condition to eat and drink of these precious provisions for those who humbly confess their sins and hunger and thirst after righteousness.

Blessed who on Him shall feed!
Bread of Life, and drink indeed.

Good Friday.

Isa. 52 : 13–53 : 1–12 : Behold, my servant shall deal prudently he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high.

As many were astonied at thee; (his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men:) so shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider.

Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? for he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him there is no beauty that we should desire him.

He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was depised, and we esteemed him not.

Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.

And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief:

when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.

He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities.

Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

OF whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself? or of some other man? This is the all-important inquiry respecting this text. It is a very natural inquiry, because of the peculiar and remarkable description which the prophet gives. It was also a very earnest and sincere inquiry on the part of the Ethiopian eunuch, who addressed it to Philip.

Had he put his question to the Jewish doctors who have flourished since the time of Christ, especially our more modern ones, he would have been told that the prophet is here speaking of himself, of Jeremiah, or of some other prophet; or that he is speaking of Uzziah, Hezekiah, Josiah, or some other Jewish king; or more probably of the Jewish people at large, humiliated and made to suffer for the sins of their fathers, or put under afflictions necessary to the fulfilment of their supposed mission to convert the nations from idolatry and to bring them to forgiveness and salvation through the Jewish testimony to one God.

Had he put his question to the more ancient Hebrew rabbis, to the Targums and conservators of the

old traditional interpretation, he would have got for answer that the prophet is here describing the great Messiah that was to come. Alschech, in his commentary on the passage, says: "Upon the testimony of tradition our old rabbins have unanimously admitted that King Messiah is here the subject of discourse." Jonathan, the Chaldee paraphrast, says of the person here spoken of, "This is the King Messiah, who is high and lifted up and very exalted—more exalted than Abraham, elevated above Moses, higher than the ministering angels." And upon the nature of the description itself and the uniform testimony of the Old-Testament Church, if we had no more certain evidence, we might very safely rest in this answer, especially as the Jewish teachers of more modern times have discarded it and chosen to repudiate the highest acknowledged authority they have on the subject, simply and only to get rid of an overwhelming prophetic argument for the Messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth. Even admitting that the Lord's servant in this case does in general refer to the Jewish people or to an inner circle of them, it is still with special reference to the central heart of Jewish faith and hope, even the personal Messiah who was to come forth from their seed as the illustrious and invincible Son of David.

But we have more direct and conclusive testimony in the case. The noble Ethiopian put his question to the Christian deacon Philip, who had come to him under a divine impulse and spoke under the influence and light of that same Spirit which was in the prophet himself. "And Philip opened his mouth,

and began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him JESUS." The New Testament in various places quotes from the same passage and applies it in the same way (Mark 15 : 28; Acts 8 : 32; Rom. 10 : 16; 15 : 28; 1 Pet. 2 : 24). And hence all orthodox Christendom, from the earliest Fathers to the present time, agrees with Jerome in the clear conviction and belief—as every believer in the inspiration of the New Testament must believe—that "in this prophecy Isaiah speaks of Christ, and speaks so plainly of Him that he seems to perform the part of an evangelist rather than a prophet."

Let us, then, look at some of the elements of this marvellous passage, and contemplate the picture which was given so long beforehand of our dear Lord and Saviour, praying God to make it as assuring to our faith and as comforting to our souls as it was in Philip's hands to the keeper of Queen Candace's treasures.

I. Our Saviour is here presented as the pre-eminent Servant of God. "Behold, My Servant," "My righteous Servant," saith the Lord. This tells at once of very high dignity, and yet of humility and subordination. As to His divine nature and Sonship He could say, "I and My Father are one;" but as to His office and mediatorship He said, "My Father is greater than I." He came, and became incarnate, to execute and carry out a divine purpose. His own word is, "I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me" (John 6 : 38). Speaking in the Psalmist before He became incarnate, He said, "Lo, I come: in the volume of

the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart," indicating His office as that of a subservient to the Father, and yet with whose service no other servant of God could bear a mention. Israel was called God's particular servant, but especially because Israel bore in it, and was to produce, that Messiah who was to take on Him the seed of Abraham and in whom salvation was to come of the Jews. In so far as Israel held to Him, and looked for Him, and believed and hoped in Him, Israel stood related to God as His servant above all people, and was righteous because holding to the Lord our Righteousness, even that Righteous Branch which was to be raised up unto David. In all the dignities and favors of ancient Israel the inner heart and life of all was the divine purpose and promise of the Messiah to be born of them, who, after all and above all, was the Servant of God—on whose transcendent services all the dignity and the expected redemption depended. Hence the word through Zechariah, " Behold, I will bring forth My Servant, THE BRANCH " (Zech. 3 : 8). And the sum of that Servant's service was to be what neither Israel nor all the prophets, saints, and holy kings of all time could render, and which could not at all be without Him as the energy and soul of it. In Him, and in Him only, was to be opened a fountain to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness. It was He, the man whose name is The Branch, that was to build the temple of the Lord, and bear the glory and sit and rule upon His throne, and be a Priest upon

His throne, and establish the counsels of peace (Zech. 6 : 12, 13). Upon Him devolved the commission to finish transgression, make an end of sins, make reconciliation for iniquity, bring in everlasting righteousness, fulfil inspired vision and prophecy, set up the holiness of holinesses, and not give over until it shall be "on earth as it is in heaven." Great, ponderous, momentous service, before which angels and archangels, seraphim and cherubim, might well quail and confess their utter impotence! Yet this was what God meant and purposed to have achieved, and He who should undertake and do it would indeed be God's Servant over all servants.

II. Our Saviour is here presented as a transcendently successful Servant. "Behold," saith the Lord, "My Servant shall deal prudently;" that is, exert and manage Himself and His work effectively and to full success. "He shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high;" "The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand." And though there should come humiliation and sorrow to astonish the world, He was to make nations tremble, silence kings, and bring to their eyes and ears what they had never heard nor known. Whatever the difficulties or the burdens or the oppositions or the hardships, He was to go through them unto victory, leave no part of His commission unachieved, and win for Himself a name, glory, and eternal renown never realized by any other being but in Him. The picture of the Passion is thus prefaced with allusions to the Resurrection, the Ascension, and the Coming again in power and great glory. Good Friday gloom is not

allowed to intervene without some intermingled rays of a succeeding Easter. Jesus from the beginning had a joy set before Him, in the anticipations of which He endured the cross, despising the shame. The mock royalty in which He was arrayed, the reed sceptre put into His hand, the crown of thorns thrust on His bleeding temples, even from the depths of His humiliation still prophesied of future dominion, when every knee should bow and every tongue confess in acknowledgment of His universal and eternal Lordship. The triumph might be slow, but it was to be complete. The way might lie through ignominy and anguish, through death and the very pangs of hell, but it was to be successfully traversed. The kingdom might be distant, and held in abeyance as if it would never come, but nothing was to deprive Him of its secure and everlasting possession. The word was spoken, and cannot be broken: "Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently; He shall be extolled and exalted, and be very high."

III. But these glorious announcements are only the preface to the story which no reason of man could ever anticipate in such a Personage. Though previously announced by this same prophet as He whose name is "Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace," destined to rule and reign in an administration of justice, judgment, and dominion without limit and without end, He is here pictured to us as *an unparalleled Sufferer*. His visage was to be marred as no other man's ever was. His form was to undergo a disfigurement and humiliation beyond all the sons

of men. The world was to become astounded at the depths and intensities of His anguish and distresses. So humble and afflicted was His appearance in the world to be that the preaching and report of Him was to be an offence to men, which the multitudes would not at all believe. Though Jehovah's arm was to be made bare in Him with wondrous attestations of His divinity, it was to be in connection with such homely humility that few would recognize or acknowledge it. Though sprung from an ancient and honored root, He was to appear as a sprout, poor and stinted, from a dry ground. No form or splendor or style or equipage to arrest the attention and command the regard of His proud countrymen was He to have—nothing to make degenerate Israel desire Him. Those in place and power were to contemn Him, as they did when they sneered at Him as the carpenter's unlettered Son and discarded Him as a glutton, a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. He was to be without patronage or friends, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. The people of consequence who claimed to be the custodians of Heaven's oracles and to act in Heaven's name were to turn away their faces from Him. He was to be a despised man—despised for His birth and estate, despised for the lowliness of His life and associations, despised for His teachings and His claims. He was to be accounted and treated as an outlaw, God-forsaken, worse than leprous, on whom no favor of Heaven could rest and whom no laws were to protect. He was to be cruelly dealt with, led as a lamb to the slaughter, as undefended as He

was uncomplaining. Without a hearing, without restraint upon the brutal outrages of His enemies, He was to be taken away to execution and cut off from the land of the living, with no one to stand up for Him or to declare His generation. Though He was to do no violence and no deceit was to be found in His mouth, He was to receive no mercy and to die a malefactor's death.

Such is the prophetic picture. I need not detain you with the pointing out of how accurately and literally all this was fulfilled in the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth. The words of the prophet are like the notes of an eyewitness. Seal never fitted to its impression on the wax with greater perfection of outline than these fore-announcements of Isaiah fit to the earthly history of our Lord.

IV. But the prophet did not stop with the portraiture of the facts. He mingles with his account the true evangelic meaning of them. He describes the marvellous and unparalleled humiliation, not for the sad story's sake, but that he may set forth how it came to be, what it was for, and what place it occupies in the great scheme of our redemption. He gives the facts that he may declare the vital doctrine of the faith. What of ourselves we could not know he tells, and tells it so clearly beforehand that when his prophecy should be fulfilled all might understand and believe the precious truth.

All these unexampled sufferings were, and were intended to be, *sacrificial and vicarious*. Nothing can be clearer than the prophet's testimony on this point. Speaking in the name of Israel and of the

Church of all ages, as though the whole were already accomplished fact, which it has since become, he says: It was our grief He bare; yea, it was our sorrows He carried. He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities. The punitive chastisement looking to our peace was upon Him, that by His stripes we might be healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have each turned to his own way; but the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. On account of the transgressions of My people was He smitten. The Lord was pleased to bruise Him and put Him to grief; His soul was made an offering for sin. He poured out His soul unto death; and He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bare the sins of many.

The ancient prophet thus anticipated the apostolic doctrine and the very essence of all saving faith, that "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us" (Gal. 3 : 13). Jesus Himself hath said, "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20 : 18, 19, 28; Mark 10 : 45); "My blood of the new testament is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Mark 26 : 27, 28); "My flesh I will give for the life of the world" (John 6 : 51–58); "I lay down My life for the sheep" (John 10 : 11–18). Even Caiaphas, unconsciously to himself, "prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only" (John 11 : 49–52). John the Baptist, the greatest of prophets, pointed to Jesus, and said, "Behold the Lamb of

God which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1 : 29). Peter therefore says, "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Pet. 1 : 18, 19). Indeed, the language of both Testaments, re-echoed in all the great religions of the world, points to the doctrine of salvation by the blood of sacrifice, the grand antitype of which is Christ crucified.

The world is prone to cavil at this doctrine. But why should it cause any one to stumble? What good has ever come to our race that has not cost the toils and sufferings and life-blood of somebody? And why should we think it otherwise when it comes to the highest of all good, the salvation of the soul? What if there be no natural connection between our Saviour's sufferings and the cancelling of human sin? The scheme has to do with a supernal government, and is arranged to higher principles than those of physical dynamics. There was no outward or perceivable connection of the lamb's blood on the doorposts of the Jewish houses in Egypt with the keeping off of the plague of death. All the physics on earth can discover none. For all that reason can show, it was a most arbitrary arrangement. And yet that blood did serve to spare the dwellers who were sheltered behind it. Why, then, may not the bitter sufferings and death of our spotless Redeemer serve to answer for our sins if sovereign Wisdom and Majesty so appoints and ordains. Let it be anomalous in nature: Christ was an anomaly; the whole idea of redemption is an anomaly;

and the absence of analogies, if they indeed be wanting, can argue nothing against Jehovah's testimony and revelation as to what by His arrangement verily exists. Let it be a mystery which no sounding-line of human reason can ever fathom: it is a blessed mystery, as full of sweetness as full of wonder. The fact is clear enough. A great Redeemer was to come, and He was to redeem by suffering in the stead of those whom He should bring to salvation. That Redeemer has come, and it was done unto Him as the prophet said and as this day memorializes. And all believing Christendom looks upon His cross, and in holy contrition confesses: "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures."

V. And yet one further presentation does our prophet give us. He was the St. Paul of the Old Dispensation. He preached the same doctrine of justification through faith in the crucified Messiah's blood. As an innocent sufferer, a Righteous Servant, a meek and uncomplaining Lamb offered in sacrifice for the sins of the world, the submissiveness of that illustrious Servant of God was to have redeeming virtue in it. Bearing the punishment of sinners, they were to be exempted on His account. Bearing their iniquities, He was to justify many. By His willing obedience unto death in their stead condemnation was to cease, and by His dying they were to live. Their sins atoned for by His blood, they were to stand arrayed in His righteousness, and so exonerated from the punishment and penalty due to them. And, justified freely by His blood, they were to have peace with God. Their iniquities were

to be as though they were not. His righteous obedience and endurance were to be accounted to them the same as if they had themselves endured the penalty and exhausted it. The sword-stroke to fall upon Him was due to them, and His receiving of it upon Himself, though it drank up His innocent life, was to hinder it from ever coming upon such as should shelter themselves under His cross.

Nor did it matter how many or great the sins of men might be, how heinous or of how deep a dye: those sufferings of His were to be effectual in cancelling them. Even His blaspheming murderers, stained with the blood-guiltiness of having killed the Lord of glory, were not to be excluded from a free and full forgiveness and absolution for all their dreadful criminality through the merits of that precious blood which they so malignantly shed. Ah, yes; high over all else, the chiefest, sweetest wonder of the cross is this, that there is now no more condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. He who knew no sin was made to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. 5 : 21). And the great doctrine of the New Testament is that, through faith in Him as our all-sufficient Surety and Substitute, we now have forgiveness through His blood.

Does the law pronounce death upon us for our transgressions? Christ has endured that death for us, and the law has nothing more with which to condemn and punish us if only we are willing to avail ourselves of the exemption which He has purchased for us. It is not that sin has ceased to be

sinful. It is not that the law has ceased to be holy and good in its requirements and penalties. It is not that we have ceased to be transgressors, or that no faults attach any longer to our prone and ever-erring lives. But it is because He has paid the debt, satisfied the law in our stead, and set us free from the death-penalty, taken our crushing burden on Himself, and given us that free exemption from condemnation that we may learn to walk and live in righteousness and true holiness.

And herein, then, is our great Good Friday treasure, that it brings and gives us an adequate satisfaction to eternal Majesty for outrages which we have committed, and proclaims to us forgiveness through the blessed Saviour's cross. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died." How can the thunderbolts of offended Heaven reach us now when He has received them into His bosom and quenched them in His blood? The only questions are, Do we believe these Gospel tidings? Are we willing to trust the safety of our souls to His sacrificial offering of Himself in our stead to cancel our debt? Do we rest in Jesus as our availing propitiation? To this end was He born. To this end did He submit Himself to the shame and anguish of His awful sufferings. To this end He took the place and attitude of God's Servant and hung and died upon the cross. To this end He is set before us crucified this day.

Wonder of wonders! On the cross He dies!
Man of the ages, David's mighty Son,
The eternal Word, who spake and it was done!
He dies! for human guilt the Sacrifice.

Easter.

1 Cor. 5 : 6–8 : Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

GENUINE religion is not all fasts and litanies. It also takes in festivals and alleluias. By evenings and mornings God constituted the world, and arranged it according to times and seasons. Thus, darkness and light, winter and summer, sorrow and joy, succeed each other; penitence comes to gladness; litanies change to thanksgivings; *miserere* turns to hosanna; death eventuates in life.

Three days ago we stood with the disciples and the holy women at the awful cross, beholding the Saviour crucified, dead, and buried. To-day we come with them to His vacant grave, thrilling with the joys of His resurrection from among the dead. The week of gloom ends up in festival. Easter Day has come and the Church keeps jubilee.

On first blush the Epistle Lesson would seem but little in accord with the occasion, but a closer view makes a different impression. Two things are em-

braced in it, to which we may well direct our thoughts in the full spirit of the day:

I. The Right Easter Feast;
II. The Right Easter Guest.

God help us in the contemplation of them!

I.

The apostle speaks of a "*feast.*" What is that feast? He calls it by a name which designated an Old-Testament observance, and which Luther in the German Bible renders *Easter.*

The old dispensation had its Easter too. It was the most sacred of all the Jewish festivals. God Himself instituted it, and commanded its observance by His ancient people throughout their generations. It marked and commemorated the birth of the Hebrew nationality. It was the cornerstone of Israel's independent existence as a nation. Their deliverance from slavery, their life as a people, their faith and hopes as believers, were all wrapped up in it. Their most precious memories, estate, and expectations connected with it. Not to keep it was treason to their commonwealth and their God. Even the shell of Judaism which still lingers in the world, failing to perceive into what the life and spirit of the old festival have passed, still recurs to it with tender interest, and tries to hold on to something of its old formalities. The fixed time for its celebration was also close at hand when the apostle wrote. That festival was the *Passover*, the Easter of the old economy.

But the apostle is speaking of a *Christian* feast, to the observance of which he exhorts. And when he calls it "our Passover" the implication is that something at least of the old festival still continues and enters also into the order of things under which we live. Indeed, the Jewish Passover itself was the type and shadow of another, of deeper and more glorious reality and moment than itself. The unblemished lamb of sacrifice appointed "until the time of reformation" referred to Christ, "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." That innocent blood which turned aside the angel of death from the dwellings on whose doorposts and lintels it was sprinkled foreshadowed "the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, that by means of death for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance." Nor is it without great significance that Christ chose the time of the celebration of the old Passover as the time of His Passion, and thus, amid the ancient types and shadows, enacted the reality to which they pointed, and for ever linked His sufferings with the Paschal solemnities. Hence the language of the text, that "our *Passover* also hath been sacrificed, even Christ; therefore let us keep the feast."

The feast of which the apostle speaks is therefore nothing more nor less than the venerable Passover of the former dispensation wrought out into evangelical fulfilment—the old typical Easter resolved into the real Easter of the Gospel.

In its original facts the old Passover presented a vivid picture of what has now come in its place. In the old there was a saving of bodily life by the blood of sacrifice; in the new, there is a saving of the soul from a far more awful death by a far richer blood. In the old there was a sublime deliverance of an enslaved and oppressed people; in the new there is a more exalted manumission, of a far more numerous people, from a far more dreadful slavery. In the old there was born an earthly nationality to the inheritance of an earthly Canaan; in the new there is a calling into life of "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people," "begotten again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven." The one was connected with memories and events which gladdened a nation for more than a thousand years; the other takes in the memory of events which have been thrilling the world for nearly twenty centuries, which have filled heaven with wonder, and which will be the great joy of a redeemed race for all the ages of eternity.

It is not, indeed, to the ceremonial of our annual Easter-time that all these sublime things are to be ascribed or confined. "The feast" referred to is vastly broader, deeper, and higher than any observances of times and seasons. But the great original Easter facts, and those occurrences and events upon which the churchly ceremonial is built, and which it seeks to keep alive and effective in the minds and hearts of men, do verily make up the feast and Pass-

over of God, apart from which there is no hope, no salvation, no release from sin and death, no freedom of the heavenly kingdom for man, such as pertains to the true guest and participant in our Easter festival.

Ask you, then, what is that Easter feast of which the apostle speaks? First of all, it is *the glorying of the soul beside the bloody cross.* There has been a notable death. A pure and innocent Being's blood is still fresh upon that stake. A life there went out amid shame and agony, while a bolt invisible rent it with all the condensed horrors of an eternal perdition. That death was endured in our stead. Those agonies were the ransom-price for our forfeited lives. "For Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us." His dying is our living. His blood turns away the death-angel from our dwellings, and speeds the work of judgment on our oppressors, dissolving the bonds that held us in a hopeless slavery. Good Friday showed the Victim immolated; Easter exhibits the result, the accused exonerated, the Victim vindicated, the enemy confounded, the oppressor paralyzed, the brickyards empty, and Israel free.

As the bow of promise spreads its arch of beauty on the raindrops of departing storms, so Easter illuminates and gilds the tears that flow over a Saviour crucified. Do we weep for so pure a Being meeting so sad a fate? Behold the immortal glory in which Easter has arrayed Him! Do we weep for the sins and condemnation laid upon His holy soul? Easter proclaims the bond cancelled, satisfaction entered, the surety discharged, and the debtor set at liberty.

"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again."

Deep and dark were the shadows that came over the hearts of the first disciples when they saw the blessed Master die and His body sealed up in the sepulchre. What hopes were buried in that grave! Fondly had His followers looked upon Him as a greater Moses come to lead His people out from under the Roman yoke to more than their pristine dignity. They trusted that it had been He who was to redeem Israel. And, lo! He who promised them salvation, Himself lay a captive in the bonds of death. Without a Lord, without a Saviour, without an outlook for the future, everything gone but the love they bore Him, and even that tremulous and ready to expire, here was worse than Egyptian darkness. And had no Easter morning come to break the dreadful gloom the hope of the world would have gone out in that sepulchre. That bloody cross had overturned the whole fabric of His people's expectations. Even the Sabbath with its sweet memories of Paradise was only leadenness with a Saviour dead and entombed. Had things so remained, Sunday with its light and glory could never have risen on our benighted world. But Easter drove the clouds asunder, and showed the bloody cross to be the signal of unspeakable triumph. The light of resurrection turned the gory instrument of death into a symbol of rejoicing, and the night of despair into blessed festival.

Furthermore, Easter is *the glorying of the soul beside the open grave.* Christmas is a joy over the cradle—Easter is an exultation over the tomb. Reason starts and wonders at the seeming paradox. To the natural heart there is not another such a dampener to cheerfulness and festive feeling as the presence and thought of the grave. With gloom and sadness love lays its tear-bathed mementos on it, and sorrowfully carries its sweet spices thither, distressed the more that there is no one to roll away the stone that closes it. But to that saddest place on all the earth Easter conducts us for high festival. It makes apostles vie with each other as to who shall reach it first. With the seal broken, the stone removed, the locks and bars of death shattered, the beloved dead beyond all cause for lamentation, what is there left of the tomb to hinder our exultation in its very face? The frowning form remains; the linen clothes and the folded napkin still are there; but with attendant angels watching by its mouth, and sons of light irradiating it with their peaceful presence, and messengers from heaven to meet us with words of blessed consolation, what is there now to make it horrible? Easter has dissolved its oppressive mystery. Not a dark avenue to a world of cheerless shades or purgatorial fires, but the place of parting with the crosses, aches, and ills of life—the place to lay earth's burdens down—the place of peaceful retirement for the putting on of the garments of supernal being,—is the Christian's grave. Easter has dismantled the house of death, vanquished the tomb, and put the sepulchre under command of the powers of

immortality. The place of tears and sombre silence is transmuted into a scene of joyous festival.

What harm was it to Jesus that He died and was laid in the grave? It ended His earthly toils and conflicts; it rested Him from His cruel agonies; it put Him beyond the reach of human malignities; it retired Him for speedy investiture with the powers of an endless life. And the coming of Easter into our world has made it the same for every right Easter guest. Faith now looks on and gives the triumphant challenge: "O Death! where is thy sting? O Grave! where is thy victory?" The tyrant's dominion is broken. The oppressor is effectually disabled. The bonds of the terrible task-master can no longer hold. God's people are free. And when they go down into the deep the waters shall not overflow them. Our Paschal feast sings pæans over the grave.

And in close connection with this is *the joy of an assured immortality*. The most oppressive thing on this earth is to follow those we love to the place of burial and see them sink down into the darkness where we can get no further tidings of them. When a child leaves home, how eagerly parental affection follows it, and fails of rest and peace till the information comes as to how it has fared, where it is, and what the details of its situation are! The soul aches for the tardy letters, the arrival of which is as sunshine after a season of cloud and gloom. How distressing, then, to see star after star in the domestic constellation disappear, leaving nothing behind them but an unbroken silence and a perpetual blank!

How precious would be the relief to survivors to have just one sure word of intelligence concerning them! But thus were the ages left to weep, and ask, "If a man die, shall he live again?" The world in its anxiety bent down its strained ears to catch, if possible, some accents of reply, but only to be thrown back on dreams and theories, many as horrible as they were all uncertain. It remained for the Christian Easter to solve the torturing mystery and bring life and immortality to light. This has broken the seal and rolled away the stone of the sepulchre. The reality of a true and glorious life to come is now demonstrated. "If Christ be preached that He rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen; and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. But *now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept*" (1 Cor. 15 : 12–20).

There had been some temporary resuscitations of the dead, but no immortal life for the body had been clearly shown. Here was the first emergence from the tomb in sublime and incorruptible being, the sample and earnest of a like resurrection for all God's people. In the light now in our possession graves prove to be but mountain-peaks of a higher and better world, and those that lie in ashes under them are plantings for a spring-time when they shall sprout

forth in glorious immortality. Because Jesus lives, we shall live also. "Them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." The first-fruits tell of a harvest of the same sort that must soon follow. Easter thus adds a new inscription on the cross, and blazons the glad record to all the earth: "I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (John 11 : 25). Christ is Himself the embodied power of resurrection, and in His own has pledged and guaranteed ours. Sacrificed for us, He is yet alive for evermore, and with His life from the dead is conjoined our immortality. In vain bereaved affection seeks its object in the silent crypt: He is not there; He is risen; and His rising as our Head and Forerunner includes and carries our rising too, and heralds the glorious certainty that we shall share His destiny. And this assurance, so precious to the soul, is no small part of our glorious Easter feast. Blessed Easter! where else shall we look for light like thine?

II.

But who, now, is the rightful guest at this high festival? Who may ascend this hill of the Lord and abide in the tabernacles of such exalted immunities?

The slain lamb and the sprinkled blood were not all that was required for a successful Passover. No leaven or leavened bread was to mingle in that festival or to be allowed place in the houses which that blood was to protect. The slain lamb, roasted in the fire, was to be wholly eaten up, so that no fragment of it was to be left unappropriated. It was to

be eaten with bitter herbs, and those who ate were to be girded and shod, ready to move out upon the new life of freedom which came to them in that holy solemnity. Without these the feast was vitiated and the blessing forfeited. They might still glory in the facts, but their glorying was not good. Even a little leaven corrupted the whole observance.

Nor is it different with our great Christian Passover. The Easter feast cannot profit without conformity to its requirements. And the ceremonial prescriptions for proper guests in the old vividly point out the spiritual qualifications for the right participation in the new.

Leaven is the symbol of diffusive and corrupting evil. Cherished wickedness comports not with Easter joy. People who are not willing and particular to put away sin are disabled from right participation in this feast. They may glory in its facts and join in the proclamation of its tidings, but their glorying is not good. The old leaven must be purged out. "The leaven of malice and wickedness" must give place to the pure "unleavened bread of truth and sincerity." Otherwise the whole service is defiled and the precious festival is a mere emptiness and sham. People are liable to deceive themselves even in their comfort and hopes in Christianity. Not every gazer on the cross or wearer of it on his bosom is a saved and forgiven man. "Not every grave lies open to the skies." Not all that die are partakers of a glorious immortality. That old leaven of sin and wickedness must be put away or the Easter joy fails of substance and reality.

There was fault in this regard in the church at Corinth. The uncleannesses of the heathen defiled the society of its members, and the corrupting elements were tolerated without protest and without demand to purge them out. There was glorying in Christianity, but the spiritual life and purity of Christianity were wanting. There was leaven of wickedness which the apostle attacked as wholly incompatible with genuine Christian exultation. The keeper of the old Passover was required to put away with studied care every particle of leaven from his house and premises, and much rather are guests at the Christian Passover under bonds to purge out and put away "the leaven of wickedness and malice" if they would make their glorying good. We live in a Christendom that is similarly defective. The world and its vices and fashions are about as common to the professed Church as to the unsanctified community about it. And yet people call themselves Christians and claim to stand under the banner of the cross! Alas! multitudes only deceive themselves. Their Passover is not that of the unleavened bread of truth and sincerity They glory in Christianity, but their glorying is not good. They suffer the leaven in their houses and in their hearts. They like their light bread and their vanities, and indulge their hatreds and jealousies against one another. They are not careful to distinguish between what is holy and what is carnal. They are not right Easter guests.

Others, again, fail to appropriate the whole Christ sacrificed for us. Such parts of Him as suit their

fancies or their likes they receive and appropriate, but leave all the rest. Their Christ is a mere human Christ—Christ an example and philosopher, Christ an exalted superhuman creature, but not God—a Christ who once lived and taught in marvellous perfection, but is long since dead and gone like a Socrates or a Plato, living in nothing but in the truths He taught; or some other abridged and imperfect Christ, which is not the all-glorious Christ of our redemption, the God-man, who expiated our sins in His own body on the tree, and ever lives and reigns Head over all things to the Church which He has purchased with His blood. Had the Jew dealt thus with the Paschal lamb, he would have been deemed a sinner in holy things and excluded from the congregation of Israel; and if people cannot take, appropriate, and believe in the true and entire Christ our Passover, neither can they be accepted guests at the Gospel Easter feast. "The curse that lies upon our race yields only to the cross" and the taking in of the whole Sacrifice which there was offered for us.

And that eating with bitter herbs was equally significant. Its corresponding spiritual requirement is also implied in what the apostle says. The purging out and putting away of sin involves a change of mind, feeling, and estimate of things which is in no wise agreeable to the natural man. It is not a pleasant thing to thwart and crucify natural likes and preferences. Repentance is a bitterness to the soul. The purging out of nursed malice and wickedness is often indeed like the plucking out of a right eye and

the cutting off of a right hand. It is a distasteful and a painful operation. But these bitter herbs must be taken with the appropriation of the sacrifice or we fail in the right use of the feast. A soul full of carnal malignities can never taste the sweetness of the Easter joy. Its glorying is not good.

And that standing girded and shod to move out upon another form of life is likewise in the apostle's mind as part of the prerequisite to the full Easter blessedness. What matters the resurrection of Christ if we do not rise from the death of sin and stand up in newness of life? What good is our spared life or our liberation from the bondage of the old condemnation if we continue in the brickyards or linger in the land of oppression? Our dearly-purchased liberty has been given us that we may set out for the land of promise. If we would keep the Easter feast, we must be ready to live the Easter life and show the Easter spirit.

The old Passover was the creation of Israel into a nation, the making of them into a new and sacred lump or people of the Lord. The Christian Passover is meant to do the same for us—to make of us a new and peculiar people, "a new lump," holy unto the Lord, a bread in which no leaven is, even "a holy nation" bringing forth the fruits of righteousness. Our baptism is meant to unleaven us—to put the old leaven from our souls, and Christ our Passover is sacrificed in vain for us if we do not now "go forth unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach." The whole spirit of Easter is new life, resurrection from the death of sin, the moving out

from the house of ignoble servitude as free men and citizens of a better country set for the land of promise, even that house and city whither our Lord has gone. And only as we imbibe and exemplify this spirit do we enter as right guests into our glorious festival.

Easter not only tells of resurrection and another life, but it *is* resurrection in living power—the actual entrance of the soul upon that life. "He that believeth on the Son *hath* everlasting life"—not only shall have it, but has it already, even now. Paul had entered into this Easter joy when he said, "*I live;* yet not I, but Christ that liveth in me." He fulfilled the true spirit of the Paschal feast when he declared, "This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3 : 13, 14). Peter had entered into the true Easter joy when he exclaimed, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath *begotten us again unto a lively hope*, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead!" (1 Pet. 1 : 3). And only as people are like-minded with these holy apostles have they the spirit and the life of right Easter guests.

What, then, dear friends, shall I say more? The feasting-time is fully come. The bloody cross has been transformed into a banner of victory. He who died upon it has become our Passover from bondage and death to freedom and life. The grave has lost

its power to chain us down to darkness and despair. A new world opens to our souls. The winter's strength has yielded, and the genial rays of an immortal spring-time are pouring upon our race. Life eternal has broken in upon this valley of dry bones. The Jubilee of jubilees is come. The memorials of it stir in our homes, glow in our sanctuaries, and thrill in our hearts. It is well. The occasion deserves it. Earth knows no superior gladness. Man has no higher blessedness this side eternity. And apostolic voices call to us to "keep the feast." Have we, then, schooled our souls into its blessed realities? Our glorying sounds aloud; let us see to it that it be "good"—that with the right Easter feast we may also fulfil the requirements of right Easter guests.

All praise to Jesus! who from death arose,
And triumphed over our infernal foes—
Glory to Jesus! o'er the mountain rolls,
Who, rising, opens heaven to faithful souls.

Second Easter.

1 Pet. 1 : 3, 4 : Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven.

THESE words were written to persecuted Christians "scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia." They were meant as words of encouragement and comfort. Happily, also, do they celebrate our great Easter joy. Nay, they embrace *three Easters* at once: *first*, the original Easter of the Resurrection of Christ; *second*, the Easter of the Resurrection of souls from the death of sin; and *third*, the still future Easter of the Resurrection of the departed saints to their eternal inheritance. Let us, then, look briefly at each of these, praying God to breathe into us something of the same happy gratefulness which animated the devout apostle when he wrote.

I.

We have just passed through the week and services commemorative of the Saviour's passion and death. We have contemplated Him on the cross, gibbeted, bleeding, dying, and dead. We have seen

His side pierced and His head hanging motionless upon His breast, His body broken and His life-blood shed. Though a good man and just, He was wickedly crucified and killed. Though many sick had been healed by Him, and the dead had been called to life again by His word, He at length became Himself a victim of death. Though the true and only-begotten Son of God, better than the angels and higher than all the kings of the earth, He was brought down to the sides of the pit and laid as a lifeless corpse in the gloomy sepulchre. The desires of His enemies thus reached their consummation. They had traduced and vilified Him, and mocked and reviled and scourged and crucified Him; but their malice was not satiated till they saw Him dead and buried and His sepulchre made secure with a seal which none might break and with a guard which dared not sleep. Their success seemed in all respects complete, and they were satisfied and hell rejoiced.

Many were the fond hopes dashed out by what had thus transpired. His disciples had confidently believed that it was He who should have redeemed Israel, broken the yoke of their oppressors, and given them the kingdom; but He had now fallen before the wrath of His foes, and the redemption for which they looked had not come. Darkness, confusion, and sorrow filled their hearts, and what to make of these things they knew not. All their hopes had wellnigh expired when their Master died, and all their fond expectations lay buried in His grave. Nor theirs alone, but the predictions of prophets, the promises of God, and all the hopes of

those who looked for salvation in Israel were likewise locked up in that rocky tomb. Had the Crucified One been retained in that sepulchre, and seen corruption there, then had the Scriptures not been fulfilled; then had the inspiration of this Book stood contradicted and disproven; then had all the expectations that had been built upon the promises concerning the Messiah been blasted; then had all ideas of absolution from sin and all hopes of blessedness been utterly confounded.

But it was not possible that Christ should be holden of death. Defeat sometimes surprises the exultant foe in the moment of fancied victory. And so it was here. At the very time when Christ was thought to be most successfully vanquished the glory broke forth. Three dark and dreary days had He lain in the rocky tomb motionless and dead. But the hand of power touched Him again. In the silent morning, while it was yet dark, He began to stir with returning life. With angels for His companions, He sat up in that tomb, unbound his eyes, folded the napkin, shook off the fragile bands of death—fragile to His almightiness—and came forth triumphant Victor even over death and hell. The earth itself shook as He walked out of that place of darkness; the guards fell at His feet as dead men; the rocks rent in fissures which gape to this day in their astonishment at what had transpired; dead saints came out of their graves and showed themselves in Jerusalem; and hell was stricken with consternation from which it has not yet recovered and never will recover. It had been "written that Christ

should suffer and rise from the dead the third day." He had Himself said concerning His body, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will build it up again." In many ways had He expressed His confidence that His soul should not be left in hell and that He should not be suffered to see corruption. And all these utterances were now triumphantly fulfilled. His enemies said that He was an impostor; that He was a Sabbath-breaker, a blasphemer, a demoniac; that He was one of the most wicked, depraved, and dangerous of men, deserving to be dealt with as a robber and a murderer. But now, with one stroke, all these aspersions were swept away, and His honor, Messiahship, and glorious divinity were for ever vindicated. He had submitted to death and the curse as the substitute and surety of His people; He had been seized and slain in their stead and for their sakes; and in His mysterious passion God had laid on Him the iniquity of us all. It was in satisfaction for that iniquity that He died; nor could He be released until the uttermost farthing was paid. But now He was suddenly restored to the light of life, showing His sacrifice accepted, our debt paid, the handwriting of our condemnation cancelled, and salvation ours. The disciples, whose hopes had died when He expired, now embrace Him as their Lord and their God. A day of spiritual festival was appointed for the special celebration of what had occurred. And from one apostle and another went forth the joyous gratulation into all the world: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy

hath begotten us again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead!"

This is the first Easter, as full of joy and sweetness as it is full of wonder. Passion Week ended, heaven and earth are again full of life and light. In shining garments the angels sit about the repulsive tomb and proclaim its power broken. Everything glows with mysterious gladness. Christianity has come to its grandest and crowning festival.

All the Church festivals cluster around this and take all their sublime significance from it. Christmas without an Easter is a mere pageant—a joy without substantial basis. Good Friday without an Easter is a mere melancholy tragedy, without justification and without hope. And Ascension Day and Whitsuntide without an Easter turn into mere empty fictions. Easter is the seal and significance of them all—the life and spring and rock of foundation for all the holy gladness that is in them. "For if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain;" "But now is Christ risen from the dead;" and this binds up into solid reality all the rest.

Hence it was that so much was made of Easter and the resurrection of Christ in the earlier and apostolic ages. Calvary was known and named, but only because it lay in the way that conducted to the garden of the Resurrection. The cross was acknowledged and gloried in, but it was the cross left vacant by the reanimation of Him who died on it. When the enemies of the new faith in derision said, "Your Lord was crucified," the grand vindication was

"True, but He rose again, ascended into heaven, and sits enthroned at the right hand of eternal Majesty." The theme of all their preaching and their hope was "Jesus and the Resurrection." The deepest, highest, and most invincible of their joy was the Easter joy, the joy over "the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

II.

But that first Easter involved a second. As there was a new-begetting of the Lord from the death of the body, so there was a begetting again of the soul through Him from the death of sin. So the apostle in the text exults, not only over "the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead," but also in that through the same he and his fellow-believers were "*begotten again*."

Humanity now is in a sad collapse from what God originally made it. It has become diseased, leprous, and hopeless through the condemnation and power of sin. It is sick unto death, and under sentence of death at the same time. As Christ parted with life on the cross by willing obedience, so humanity has parted with spiritual life through wilful disobedience. Hence the Scriptures everywhere represent the natural man as "*dead*." And very apt and easily verifiable is the description.

A dead man is unconscious. You may say over him what you please, but he hears you not. You may put him in a coffin or in a bed, and he knows not the difference. You may let him down into the earth, and lay rocks over him, and cover him deep

with clods and mould, but he knows as little of it as the rocks or clods. Nations may be in conflict over his grave, but he is not disturbed. The storm, the thunder, and the earthquake may crash and roll around, above, and beneath him, but he heeds them not. Wild beasts may dig after him and be tearing him from his coffin to devour him, but he is not horrified, not alarmed, not at all troubled at what is transpiring. And how is it with men in regard to spiritual things? God speaks to them, but they heed it not. Under the rigors of the law or under the genial radiance of the Gospel it is all the same. Though sunk deep down from the light and hope of heaven, they are as insensible to the fact as if they were stones. Worlds are in conflict about them and momentous issues are being decided over them, but it is all nothing to them. The hyenas of hell are grappling for them, but they are unmoved and unconcerned. They are dead.

A dead man is cold. His blood is stagnant and chilled. No warm breath is in his nostrils, no ruddy glow is upon his skin. You may touch him, but your hand is shocked with the unexpected iciness of the sensation. But wherein does the heart of the natural man differ from this? Did the wet rocks of Christ's sepulchre give Him a colder reception than that which His Gospel receives in the hearts of the unbelieving? Once those hearts were warm with holy fires and affections, but sin has chilled them and left only ashes and cinders, coldness and death.

Nor can a dead man ever live again except by the extraordinary power of God. When life is extinct

all ordinary hope for this world is also extinct. No human agency can restore the dead. You have seen the stricken mother bend over her only child and mourn and pray and call that it might breathe again, but never another pulse did it beat. You have seen the agonized daughter stand at the coffin of her father and call to him with earnestness and pathos which seemed enough to melt a stone, but his eyes never once opened to look upon her in her grief and not a muscle in his frame ever stirred. You have seen the young wife take the white hand of her lifeless husband and speak in his ear, and entreat him by all the anguish of her early widowhood to answer her just one more word, but her appeals were all in vain. Death had taken hold on him, and no human power or skill or tenderness could deliver. And so with those who are still without Christ. No powers of argument, no energies of eloquence, no force of persuasion, no appeal of affection, no address of love, no tenderness of sympathy, no call of interest, can wake in them the slightest spiritual emotion or recover them to life, to God, and to holiness. Their case calls for a power higher than man can wield. They are *dead*, and only He who originally gave life can beget them again to their proper being.

But dead people have been restored to life. Elijah prayed for the resuscitation of the dead child of the widow of Sarepta, and God heard him, "and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived." When the daughter of Jairus died Jesus "said unto her, *Tabitha, cumi*, and her spirit came again, and straightway the damsel arose." When He came

"nigh to the gate of the city called Nain, there was a dead man carried out; and He came near, and touched the bier, and said, Young man, I say unto thee, arise; and he that was dead sat up, and began to speak." And when Lazarus had been "dead four days" Jesus stood by his grave and cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth;" and he that was dead and putrid obeyed and lived again. And so the "dead in trespasses and in sins," the spiritually dead, are not beyond hope. Man cannot quicken them, but God can. Our eloquence cannot arouse them, but the command of God can. They may be thoughtless and insensible, but God can make them serious and tender. They may be cold and hard and unfeeling, but He can warm and awake and move them. And God really intends that all should be partakers of this moral quickening and be re-begotten from the dead. Not willing that any should perish, He has provided amply for our spiritual resuscitation. He has sent forth His Word to each of us, saying, "*Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead.*" His blessed Spirit is moving upon the palsied soul as it moved upon the face of the waters, and pouring like the sunlight from the heavens to bring every dull sleeper to consciousness and action. By the written and preached Word, by His ordinances and His providences, and by the influences of ten thousand agencies of good, God is pressing His commands through all the lanes and alleys of this world's moral cemetery, prompting, urging, and quickening sinners and bringing them up from death to life. Few indeed are the people who do not more

or less feel the going forth of this divine power, and with many it is gloriously effective. While thousands by their continual resistance of the Spirit remain dead and go down to everlasting putrefaction, there are some who yield and heed and are made to stir with spiritual emotion, and to go forth in the light and liberty of the sons of God.

Where the reanimating power first touched them, or how long the electric current of grace was in contact with their cold hearts before bringing those hearts to pulsate again with their long-lost life, they may not be able to tell. But somehow they have been made to hear a voice, and with it came a warning in all the recesses of their souls, and a stirring of energies which they had not felt before, and a drawing toward sacred things, and a Godward magnetism moving them to what they had esteemed only repulsive, and a waking among all their faculties for new lines of effort, and such a general transformation of their being as placed them in a new world, with another atmosphere, other surroundings, other objects of hope and interest. In ways inexplicable to themselves they have "passed from death unto life"—"begotten again to a lively hope." It is the shell of the old carnal life broken. It is the stone rolled away from the door of the tomb of the soul. It is the coming forth of a new creature in Christ Jesus. It is the casting away of the old wraps of sin and condemnation. It is the restoration of communion with heaven. Old things have passed away, and, behold, all things are become new. A new power of resurrection, issuing from the Sa-

viour's sepulchre, has multiplied itself in thousands of souls. The mother's anxious prayers have been answered. The pastor's anxious endeavors have served their purpose. The burdened longings of the Church are fulfilled. The voice of rejoicing is in the tabernacles of the righteous. New songs are heard in heaven among the angels of God. For the lost are found, the prodigals that were dead are made alive again. A second Easter has come, and myriads exult in the apostolic song, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to His abundant mercy, *hath begotten us again*"!

III.

But there is still another Easter referred to in our text. The Resurrection of Christ was the beginning of a resurrection which not only restores dead souls, but which involves the resurrection of dead bodies also. "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept." There is a coming harvest of which He was the specimen and first sheaf. When He arose many of the saints long dead rose with Him, and appeared unto many as the harbinger and earnest of a like return of all who sleep in the dust of the earth. "By the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" believers are not only "begotten again," but begotten "*unto a lively hope*." Born into a new sonship, there goes with it birth to a new heirship. A nativity in grace through faith in what Christ has done for us, is a nativity to an inheritance. *Hope* is therefore the possession of

all the re-begotten. The new life is a life of hope, and that hope is a *lively* or living hope, in the double sense that it is itself a thing of life and lays hold on a further life to come—a hope begotten by resurrection, to happy recovery from the death of sin, for a yet future resurrection "to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven." Death, or what is equivalent to death, still awaits our mortal bodies. Christianity mutilates and disarms death, and will presently abolish it altogether; but for the present bodily death still holds its sway. To the believer it is really not death any more. Its sting has been extracted. Its power to harm has been taken away by the satisfaction Christ has rendered. But still, we must die. Whatever we may do, we grow old; these earthly powers waste away; and presently we sink to the grave as all our fathers before us. And if in this life only we have hope, then are we of all men most miserable. But being begotten again by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, it is to a hope which sees death vanquished and doomed presently to let all its prisoners free, and to be utterly swallowed up in victory.

Long, very long, has death reigned. Its subjects are innumerable. What ashes of martyrs has it given to the winds! What bones of slaughtered saints "lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold"! The soil of every land is half made up of the remains of the dead. But not a child of God has ever gone down in earth or sea but shall come up again, rebuilt by Jehovah's hand into an imperishable monu-

ment of the resurrection and the life. Our firm and lively hope in Christ is that a nearing day shall dawn which shall empty every grave, and render every "Here lies the body of ———" a sculptured falsehood—a day when mortality shall be swallowed up of life—a day when every cemetery shall yield up its crowd of dead, and all that sleep in the dust of the earth shall arise. Let reason quibble and unbelief suggest what difficulties it may; He who brought up the Lord Jesus from the dead is able also to bring up all others; and His Word tells us that "the hour is coming when all that are in the graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth."

Earth has been the theatre of many a thrilling triumph, but never has there been one like that to which our hope directs us. "For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." The graves of patriarchs and prophets shall open at that signal. The apostles, martyrs, and confessors shall hear it, and come with them. And unknown saints that died in garrets and cellars and barns and dungeons; and lowly poor who sleep in potters' fields; and congregations of little ones whose names the world has never known; and myriads of men and women whose bodies have been laid away with loving hands in hope of a better morning,—all shall be recalled to life and beauty and blessedness, to shine as the stars for ever and ever. And thousands more far on the way to death—consumptives fading with decay, paralytics bound to their sick-room chairs, rheumatic cripples whose joints pain has lifted from their sockets, maimed sol-

diers of the cross hobbling sorrowfully on their crutches, benighted blind feeling their uncertain way through perpetual night, and fevered patients tossing on their uneasy beds, and aged saints waiting with their hands upon the latch to make their exit from the world, shall feel the sudden thrill of immortal power lifting them as on eagles' wings to join the glorious company of the children of the resurrection. Ah, me! It will be Easter morning then!

And what a world is that to which it brings! We are but minors now; we shall reach our inheritance then. Here all we have decays; the flowers wither and die; our fondest treasures corrupt and pass away. But the inheritance there is incorruptible. Here everything is mingled with defilement. The trail of the serpent is in every scene of beauty. Sin mars and taints the holiest thoughts and the purest of endeavors. When we essay to rise, we find ourselves chained to a body of death. There the inheritance is undefiled. Here nothing lasts. The seasons come and go. The summer ends. The joy of to-day gives way to the grief of to-morrow. We scarce begin to live till we must die. But the inheritance there fadeth not away. Eternity is written on all its wealth of glory. "And there shall be no more death; neither sorrow nor crying; for the former things are passed away."

Nor can any one ever cheat us out of that inheritance. It is reserved in heaven for us. It is for ever secure. Christ our Forerunner has taken possession of it for us. He holds it in undiminishable security. Our title is inalienable. And when the word, "Come,

ye blessed of My Father," is spoken, the silver trumpet of the eternal jubilee shall sound; the immortal flowers wave their golden cups; the grand *Te Deum* pour its endless melodies; and angel hands conduct the resurrection-hosts through all the glorious walks of Paradise regained.

Very glad and joyous is our Easter festival now, but then shall come an Easter Day whose joys cannot be told, when cherubim to cherubim shall cry, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts! The whole earth is full of His glory." And in that blessedness faith in the risen Jesus shall give us everlasting part.

The font stands yet in many a church's portal,
  The prayers still echo round where we were made
Heirs of an Eden beautiful, immortal,
  Where never serpent glided through the glade.

There flows eternally the gifted river,
  Whose healing wave is as the crystal clear;
There grows the Tree of Life that sheddeth never
  Its twelve bright fruits renewed twelve times a year.

For us that cooling wave, for us the beauty
  Of that bright place that has nor sun nor night,
If but by Christ's dear grace, in love and duty,
  We walk below like children of the light.

Third Easter.

1 Cor. 15 : 20: But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept.

THE first thing that strikes our attention in reading this text is the manner in which it characterizes death and the condition of men in death. It is unquestionably of the dead that the apostle is speaking, and of whom he calls the risen Christ the "first-fruits." But he does not call them *dead*. He uses a different word altogether—a word of attractive sweetness—a word which designates a thing familiar to our experience, and a great and precious gift of God. He speaks of the departed as persons *asleep*—merely asleep. Four times in this one chapter he speaks of death as a *sleep*. This is also the view of death everywhere presented in the Gospel. Natural reason, forming its judgments from no better light than man's instinctive recoil from a thing so dark, and the effects observed by the senses, has pictured death as the King of Terrors, a superlative monster, the embodiment of all horrors, a voracious tyrant—

> from age to age insatiate,
> Drinking the blood of men, gorging their flesh,
> And with his iron teeth grinding their bones
> To powder, treading out beneath his feet
> Their very names and memories.

And even with opportunity for a better understanding many look upon death as the

> vile worm that gnaws
> The root of all man's happiness; the gall
> Of all his sweet; the thorn of every rose
> Of earthly bloom; cloud of his noonday sky;
> Dark spot on every form of loveliness;
> Rank smell amidst his rarest spiceries;
> Harsh dissonance of all his harmonies;
> Reserve of every promise; and the *if*
> Of all to-morrows.

But this is a one-sided and untruthful conception. We do not connect such ideas with sleep. We rather take it as a happy thing—

> Tired Nature's sweet restorer—

a beautiful gift of Heaven. And natural death is only *sleep*—at worst a little deeper and a little more protracted. There is no more extinction of the being in the one than in the other—no more severance from the light, beauties, and activities of life—no more sense of mutilation, loss, or privation—no more consciousness of disability or the lapse of time. And especially as related to Christ, His promises, and His purpose, there is no more hopelessness and no less repose and refreshing comfort in the one than in the other, so far as the sleeper is concerned. Nay, so far as there is any difference between death and sleep, it is all in favor of death; for there can be no disturbance of its repose, and when it is over the rising is not to the old toil and weariness and tears. We know sleep better, and so we resign ourselves to it in grateful confidence, and esteem it a precious friend

in whose kind arms we lose our sorrows, and our cares and aches and heaviness are charmed away in blessed peace. Did we know death as well, we would "dread our graves as little as our beds." At any rate, the uniform teaching of the Gospel is that under Christ death is but a *sleep*—a thing whose whole character is best described by what we know and mean by this word. To die is not, as faithless poets would have it,

> To be imprisoned in the viewless winds,
> And blown with restless violence round about
> The pendent world; or to be worse than worst
> Of those, that lawless and uncertain thoughts
> Imagine, howling;

nor the thrusting of the soul upon unwilling wings to sally forth to some

> lone, uncomfortable coast,
> A naked, wandering, melancholy ghost.

Such imaginings may indeed befit those who discard our Scriptures or know nothing of them, or prefer to rest on their own weak and limited reason rather than on the blessed revelations of the all-knowing and almighty One; but for those who know God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent, the thing is different. Death in the Lord is just as grateful and as sweet to the departing spirit as the welcome repose of him

> who wraps the drapery of his couch
> About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams.

We speak as heathen, and show how weak and un-

informed we are in the great assurances of our faith, when we are so horrified and complaining with regard to death. Jesus says it is nothing to be dreaded,—that it is to His people only a sleep, a holy, heavenly sleep. Christians trouble themselves with needless dread and horror by thinking otherwise. Since Christ has risen we may silence our disturbing fears and meekly bide our time till He shall say to us, "Sleep, My children, sleep!" or call us at His coming to mount up to Him in the heavenly places. What we need is faith to believe it, and then our fears are no more. Death is a sleep.

A second notable particular in this brief text is the manner in which it characterizes the resurrection of Christ. It says He is "become *the first-fruits of them that slept.*" This is a most significant affirmation, and one which throws a glorious light upon a very dark and mysterious territory. The language is Jewish, and refers back to an important provision of the old ceremonies.

Before the Hebrews were allowed to harvest or gather their crops they were required to take a portion of the very first that ripened and formally present it to the Lord, waving it before the altar in acknowledgment of His goodness. And these first gatherings were called *the first-fruits* of the harvest that came after. It was a beautiful regulation. It sanctified their bread before it was harvested.

And so Christ is "the first-fruits of them that slept," whose lifting up consecrates the whole congregation of them that sleep. As He was raised, so all His people shall be. The fallen bodies of all de-

parted saints are as seeds sown in the earth from which there is to be a future harvest, of which the risen Christ was the earliest ripe, the first gathered, the first-cut sheaf from a common field.

It appears, then, that there were no proper resurrections prior to the resurrection of Christ. There had been numerous resuscitations of natural life, both at the hands of holy prophets and at the hands of Jesus in His lifetime. But these were not examples of the great resurrection. They were mere resuscitations of natural life, no different in their effects upon the condition of the parties than recovery from dangerous sickness. Their lives afterward were just the same kind of lives they lived before, and they doubtless died again just as if they had never died at all. The same is true of the miraculous recoveries to life wrought by the apostles. The first real resurrection to that riper and higher form of life to which the saints are destined was the resurrection of Christ Himself. He was "*the first-fruits of them that slept*," and if He was "the first-fruits," there were no fruits of that particular kind before Him.

And as "the first-fruits" of this maturing harvest we can also tell what our resurrection is to be; for the pattern and sample of the harvest is in the first-fruits. All that comes after them is always of the same kind with them. They represent the whole harvest. They are simply the first instalment of the common product of the same field. If they are of grains or fruits, the same is the harvest of which they are the first. As by the sheaf or the cluster or the kneaded meal waved before the Lord it was

known and shown what the rest of the ingathering was to be, so Christ as "the first-fruits of them that slept" is the sample of the further reaping to be made from the same territory. What His resurrection was, our resurrection is to be.

This text, therefore, places us in position for ascertaining something clear and definite with regard to that future which the New Testament sets before our hopes.

The resurrection of the body is thus presented to us as an unmistakable certainty. The very body which Jesus took of the blessed Virgin, and which was nailed to the cross, was raised up again in His resurrection. Not some other body like it, nor a mere appearance of His incarnate form, but the very same substantial and palpable frame in which He did eat and drink before His crucifixion, was once more before the eyes and presented to the touch of His disciples "after He rose from the dead." It was a body capable of all the energies of life, susceptible of all the true affections of our common manhood, though now impassable and deathless. It was no longer a mortal body, for it had "put on immortality," but it was still a body, and that same body in which He had suffered, though now "glorified." A great and transfiguring change had come upon that body, but it was the same and identical with that which was known in natural life. The immortality of the soul, as a mere soul, is a heathen doctrine, and no part of the teachings of Christianity. That the soul lives on when the body dies is distinctly enough affirmed. It is specifically told us

that the body may be killed, while yet the soul remains untouched and unharmed. But the sort of existence it lives while death holds the body is like that which the soul lives while the body is asleep; for the true nature of death is that of a sleep. But that sleep is not to be perpetual; and so there is no immortality for human souls separate and apart from bodies. It was not a mere ghostly or soul-life in which Christ reappeared after His resurrection, for His appeal to His disciples was, "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself: handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have." If He had reappeared to His disciples as a mere soul or ghost or spirit, His body would have remained in the tomb, but it did not remain there; and the explanation given by the angel of its disappearance was that Christ was risen; and the stress of the explanation centred on the fact that His body had taken life again, and had gone forth in the power of that transforming reanimation. If the resurrection of Christ was not a resurrection of the body, it was no resurrection at all, for He was neither dead nor fallen except as respected His bodily life. And if the resurrection of other sleepers in the grave is to be like His, it must be a resurrection of the body too.

We therefore believe and hold as the true Christian faith and hope what is so plainly confessed in the Apostles' Creed, that there will be a "resurrection of the body"—the same body that dies and corrupts in the grave, changed, of course, and with far superior qualities, but still identical with the body

that was worn in this world. The resurrection body is not the same in corruption, in weakness, in earthiness, in liability to sickness and decay, nor in disabling necessities with the natural body. All these are laid off in death, never to be resumed again. And the earthy particles composing the bodies we now wear, in their present forms at least, will also be left in their parent dust, and may be wrought over and over in nature's laboratory to form many successive earthly bodies. But, still, the doctrine is that there is an inner principle or substance in each of these dying bodies which the great power of God will reawaken and regenerate, and by means of which the identity of them shall continue; so that it is "*this corruptible*" that puts on incorruption, and "*this mortal*" that puts on immortality.

The butterfly is the same creature with the caterpillar which preceded it, though one exhibits a vastly higher form of being and capacity than the other. The body of the one is identical with the other; it is the same, only put through a further process of development and exaltation. Much of the gross material, as well as the form and appetency, of the caterpillar perishes in the transition, but the same corporeal being passes from the one into the other. So the seed which we plant is the same identical thing that springs up into a stalk with blades and blossoms. There is a wonderful change wrought in the process, but that which grows into the new form is the same that was planted in the seed, though much of that seed decays, remains in the earth, and is resolved to its original dust. And this is the exact

illustration which the apostle gives of the resurrection of the body: "Thou fool! that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain; but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him, and to every seed his own body. So also is the resurrection of the dead." The changes in all such cases are wonderful; but in each of them the first is the starting-point for the last, and the chain of identity which connects the one with the other is never once broken or lost.

To this, then, we must hold fast as the proper and distinguishing Christian faith on the subject, that the resurrection will be the restoration of the whole man, body, soul, and spirit—the recovery of everything pertaining to the full integrity of our nature and identity as embodied souls; so that, though "worms destroy this body," yet *in our flesh*, renovated and changed, we shall see God.

And with the settlement of the doctrine that we are to be resurrected in the likeness of Christ, and to live again in true corporeal being, there follows also very directly this further implication, that among the resurrected ones there will be recognition of one another. Christ after His resurrection was known and identified by His friends, and even by Paul, who had never seen Him in His lifetime.

Awful as the thought is, we may not doubt that even in outer darkness they that have sinned together shall be conscious of their common anguish; and they that have tempted their fellows in condemnation shall look in horror on those they have destroyed, and all the long-drawn consequences of their evil

life shall be unfolded to their sight in the misery of those that have fallen by their guilt. Else why was the rich man so anxious that his five brethren should not come into the same place of torment with himself? And if this be the case on the side of the lost, why should not the resurrected saints know each other as the instruments of each other's salvation?

And why should not all holy friendships here interrupted by the cessation of life be resumed again in nobler forms when that life is again resumed in the resurrection? Many timidly question and wonder whether it is not too blessed to be true; but if we are to believe in the resurrection of the whole man in greater perfection than the first life, why doubt that what entered so largely into our being and blessedness here shall be resumed in that greater blessedness of the same being there? How shall we be equal then to what we are now if one half of all our conscious being shall be for ever annihilated? If memory and knowledge and affection be so dim and overcast in that resurrection-life as that we shall not remember and know and love with all the absolute fulness and identity of our present being, how shall that life be considered perfect?

This was no doubtful question in the earlier days of Christianity. The great bishop of Hippo, St. Augustine, discoursing on the resurrection, asked, "Shall there not be a recognition of us all? Do ye think that ye shall recognize me then because ye know me now, and that ye shall not know my father whom ye have not known here, or the bishop who years ago ministered over this church? *Ye shall*

know all. They who shall be there shall not recognize each other because they have seen each other's faces; the mutual recognition of that place shall come from a higher knowledge. And all shall see them, and much more excellently, as prophets here are wont to see." So it was believed and taught then, and so it may be believed now. All the saints of God shall have a knowledge of things and of each other, not sought out of the memory, nor gathered from experience, nor drawn from reasonings, but by insights and consciousness and beatific vision. Shall we not know angels, such as Gabriel and him whose name was "secret," and heavenly administrators who have served us as ministering spirits? And, knowing angels, shall we not know the saints who have fought side by side with us in the battles of the Lord? Shall we know angels and not know Moses and Elijah and Abraham, and the prophets, apostles, and heroes of the faith who counted not their lives dear unto them that they might obtain a better resurrection? And if we shall know them whom we have not seen, how shall we not know them that have companied with us in our earthly pilgrimage? Shall we recognize the objects of our faith and not the objects of our love? Shall we know those of whose appearance our imaginations have wrought in vain to shape so much as an outline, and not know those with whom we have here been in constant fellowship through many long years of our earthly sojourn, and whose forms, bearing, and speaking looks and every visible movement are interwoven with all our consciousness of our own

being? Do we profess our faith in "the communion of saints," and yet so contract and limit that communion as to confine it to this life only, where we never meet more than a very small fraction of that community? Away with all such stinted confidence! Doubts here can only grow out of a dwarfed apprehension of the nature and range of Christianity itself, and of those promises which it gives out to all believers.

Yes, my earth-worn soul rejoices,
And my weary heart grows light;
For the thrilling angel-voices,
And the angel-faces bright,
That shall welcome us in heaven
Are the loved ones long ago,
And to them 'tis kindly given
Thus their mortal friends to know.

O ye weary, sad, and tossed ones!
Droop not, faint not, by the way;
Ye shall join the loved and just ones
In that land of perfect day.
Harp-strings, touched by angel-fingers,
Murmur in my rapturous ear;
Evermore their sweet song lingers:
"We shall know each other there."

Much of these earthly natures and constitutions and affections of course must be stript off in death and left in the grave. So far as they relate to mere flesh and blood, they must be resolved with flesh and blood to former nothingness. But so sure as we shall carry the identity of our present being over into the glories of the resurrection, so surely shall knowledge of each other and the sweet communings

and fellowship of soul go with us, in no wise stinted, but amplified and augmented in blessedness in proportion as that life is higher than this present one. Let men say what they will, interpose what objections and embarrassments to the theory that they may, call us fools or call us wise, as sure as death is but a sleep and the resurrection a restoration of our former self, as Christ's resurrection was to Him, just so surely do we know that loving souls shall meet again as they parted, only with the last traces of the old earthiness gone and the radiance of immortal beauty in its place.

And that glory and blessedness shall be for ever. "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him;" and He was simply "the first-fruits of them that slept." When they arise, as they shall at His coming, neither will they die any more; neither will there be any more waste, exhaustion, or termination to their blessedness.

> Then will Peace wreathe her chain
> Round us for ever.

"Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." Then shall spring the Easter flowers that never wither, and glow the Easter light that never fades, and roll the Easter anthem that never cloys and never ends, and gush the Easter joy that never fails, and open out the Easter life and glory through the everlasting ages of ages.

And what better thing can we wish or think than

is thus set before us in this one little text? What sublimer blessedness and glory can we conceive than this Godward expansion through death and resurrection to immortal mastery over all disabilities—this quiet laying down of our weary frames to sleep in order to awake with all our being rejuvenated, transfigured, glorified, requiring no more sleep, freed from all faults and infirmities and clouds of mortality, and ripened into all the mysterious perfection of a life that ends not, a world that knows no sorrow, and fellowships as immortal as ourselves? And yet it is all ours and for us, as certainly as Christ is risen from the dead and become the first-fruits of them that slept, if only we believe in Him.

Blessed Gospel, that thus brings life and immortality to light!

First Sunday after Easter.

1 JOHN 5 : 4–11 (Revised Version): For whatsoever is begotten of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. And who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and the blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three who bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and the three agree in one. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for the witness of God is this, that He hath borne witness concerning His Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in him: he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he hath not believed the witness that God hath borne concerning His Son. And the witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life.

LL the creations of God are arranged in groups, each with its own particular centre. The earth and the several planets belonging to our system have their centre and dependence in the sun, around which they revolve. Christianity also has its centre, around which everything relating to it is grouped and on which everything depends. That centre is the Lord Jesus Christ, who is "the Sun of Righteousness," who occupies the same relation to the Christian system which the

natural sun occupies in the solar system. Everything of Christian grace, life, faith, experience, triumph, and hope hangs on Him. God has given us eternal life, but that life is in His Son. If any one is born of God, begotten to place and immunity in the divine kingdom, it is he that "believeth that Jesus is the Christ." If any one overcometh the world and lives to a new dominion from that which controls natural men, it is "he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God." Nor is there any salvation for man except that which depends upon Jesus Christ.

The principle by which the various planets are connected with the sun and held in their places and orbits is the principle of attraction, the law of gravitation. It is the same that holds everything to the earth which belongs to the earth. The corresponding principle by which Christians are connected with Christ, and held in their places and relations in the system of salvation, is also a principle of attraction, a law of spiritual gravitation, which the Scriptures call *faith*. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

These are the ideas presented in the text, in which we note three leading particulars:

I. What Faith Grasps;
II. What God has done to Beget it;
III. What it Does for those who Have it.

And may God help us to consider them reverently and to our profit!

I. What Faith Grasps.

As Christianity centres in a Person, Christian faith must necessarily grasp and hold to that Person in order to have place in the Christian system. As the earth and planets by attraction grasp the sun, and hold to, follow, and obey the sun, and thus are upheld and kept in place as members of the solar system, so must faith grasp, hold, follow, and obey Christ to give us position in the system of which He is the Sun and Centre. To miss this hold on Him is to miss everything that can make a man a Christian. It matters not for any brightness or beauty of nature or attainments: if he fails to be thus linked to Christ, or to maintain his hold upon Christ, he fails in his Christianity, and is at best but a wandering star, outside of the system of grace, with nothing but the blackness of darkness reserved to him. He can be put and kept in place in the sphere of salvation only by this unrelaxing hold on the Lord Jesus, who is the centre of that sphere. The planets cannot accept what centre and dependence they please. They must take and hold to the sun or they cease to be of the system which the sun governs, and lose all part in its destiny. They must also take and hold to the sun as God has made and placed it. They cannot make a sun for themselves, or alter the one that is, or take just so much as may suit them. They must take and hold to the sun as it is, or they fail of place in the system. And it is the same in the system of grace and salvation. We cannot make a Sun or Saviour of our own. We cannot alter or control the Christ whom God has constituted

and made the centre and dependence of all-redeeming grace and power. And if we take the Christ at all, we must take Him as He is. We cannot let go one part of His nature or office or command, and still hold relation to Him as our Lord and dependence, or still retain place in the system of which He is the centre. If we have any standing, position, and hope in Christ, it must needs be in the one, entire Christ, and in exactly what He is and does in the work of giving unto men eternal life. A Christ who is a mere man, and not the Son of God as no mere creature is the Son of God—a Christ who was not in glory before the creation of the world, or had no inherent right to equality with God—a Christ who was not truly incarnated so as to become one Person, at once true God and true man—a Christ whose humiliation and obedience unto death did not serve as a sacrificial offering, as the foundation of God's forgiveness and reconciliation to sinners—a Christ who is not alive from among the dead and reigning in eternal majesty as the King and Lord of all grace and glory for the condemned and lost,—is not the Christ of sacred prophecy and the Gospel, and no embrace or holding to any such a Christ can ever serve to make us members of that kingdom of life of which Jesus is the Sun and Centre. Faith must accept the Son of God, embrace Him that came by water and blood, baptized in Jordan and crucified on Calvary, as the true Christ and only Saviour, and hang on to that same Jesus as the spring and Lord of life and glory to our lost race, or it does not grasp and hold what alone can give us place and

portion in the system of grace and salvation. For "he that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life."

II. What God hath done to Beget Faith.

It is not required that we should thus believe without ample reason for it. Faith is the belief of adequate testimony. We cannot believe by merely willing it. There must be evidence for faith to rest on. Hence God has not left Himself without witness. Nay, the apostle claims that God has given such abundant testimony respecting His Son that not to believe is to make Him a liar. And as by two or three witnesses all truth is established, God has so arranged that "there are three who bear witness—the Spirit, the water, and the blood: and the three agree in one."

The Spirit in this instance can be none other than the Spirit of God, who wrought in the prophets, was revealed in Christ, and has ever been potent in and with God's people in all the ages. And the testimony of the Holy Ghost to Jesus of Nazareth is both ample and glorious.

We contemplate the long succession of ancient prophets. So marked are they in their character, pure in their lives, superhuman in their powers, marvellous in their enlightenment, complete in their mastery of the things they claimed authority from Heaven to say and teach, and armed with such manifest proofs of familiarity with the mind and purposes of God, that all devout and candid people have ever accepted them as divinely aided and in-

spired. We find it an axiom of holy record that "prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet. 1 : 21). We survey their utterances and compare the burden of their messages, from Enoch to Noah, from Abraham to Moses, from Samuel and Elijah to Isaiah and Malachi and Simeon and John the Baptist, and discover at every point the same identical golden thread extending from the gates of Eden, across the Deluge, through all changes of the world, down to Bethlehem and Nazareth and Jordan and Calvary, and terminating in one marked and mysterious *man*—the man Christ Jesus. The nation and family whence He was to spring, the time and circumstances of His appearance, His manner of life, His supernatural endowments, the nature of His doctrines and ministrations, His treatment by those He came to serve, the work He was to do, the death He was to die, and what was to come of Him and His achievements, even to the minutest particulars of times, places, and events, we find set out and foretold in advance of the facts, against all natural likelihoods, and beyond all possible conjectures in the ordinary course of human affairs. The proofs are manifest throughout that these things could never have been conceived, foreseen, and recorded, as they were, hundreds and thousands of years before they transpired, except by the illumination of that all-knowing Spirit whence they claimed to have been derived. And as we behold them all fulfilled in every item to the letter, and still fulfilling before our very eyes, in that same

Jesus who died on Golgotha and lives and reigns in sovereign majesty, there comes before us a testimony of the Holy Ghost as clear and overwhelming as the sun in the heavens that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

We observe this man speaking as never man spake, clothed with awful majesty even in His humility, impersonating an untiring goodness and devotion beyond all that earth had ever seen—the sick, lame, halt, and blind healed by His word or touch, the winds and waves obedient to His command, the most secret thoughts of men all open to His view, the dead returning to life at His call, and the very devils letting go their victims and hasting away in terror at His bidding. We look on with amazement, and feel with Nicodemus that no man could do these miracles which He did except God were with him. And when we find Him everywhere appealing to these works as done by the Holy Ghost, and as the divine credentials of His claims of having come forth from the eternal Father, we have before us a still further and most convincing witness of the Spirit to His divine Sonship and appointment as the world's true Lord and Redeemer.

We glance at His disciples, waiting at Jerusalem as He directed that they might receive power from on high. We see that power come according to promise, enabling them to speak in languages they had never learned, changing their timidity into confidence and heroism, touching their illiterate lips with every mastery of truth and eloquence, thrilling Jerusalem, shaking Judæa, and starting into life a

new impulse which has been fashioning the ages since, and is to-day the most commanding force in human society. We search for some rational and adequate explanation of these things, but find it not, except in what Peter testified, that this all is the witness of the Holy Ghost, sent forth in attestation of Christ's success and power as our invincible Mediator, Lord, and Saviour.

Such is the Spirit's witness to Jesus Christ as the object of our faith, trust, and dependence for eternal life.

And to this agrees also the witness of *the water.* Christ came by water at His Baptism. That was His formal induction into the great office of His Christhood and Mediatorship. That He might fulfil all righteousness He accepted it, and that He might be made manifest to Israel, John administered it. It marked His coming into office and place as the Christ. And as we contemplate the scene we see Heaven itself bearing witness to Him. The sky parts over Him. A voice from the empyrean depths utters itself: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The Holy Ghost takes the visible form of a dove and descends and abides upon Him. John gazes in adoring reverence and proclaims this the divine signal by which he was to know the Christ, and accordingly gave it as his great testimony that this is the Christ, the Son of the living God (John 1 : 32–34).

Nor then and there did this witness of the water end. Christ ever comes by the water of Baptism, the standing sacrament of His Church, unto new

life, even the confession of His name, the washing away of sins, and the taking of place as His disciples. Baptism is inseparable from the name of Jesus as the Son of God, one with the Father and the Holy Ghost, with all power to give eternal life and salvation. It is therefore a lasting monumental witness to Him, and to all that the Scriptures testify and faith believes concerning Him. Wherever Christianity is, there Baptism is, in all the world and for all time. No man can adequately account for its presence and character except on the admission that Jesus Christ did live, and was what is written of Him, and is all that He is claimed to be. And in a testimony more durable than the Pyramids the gentle water thus witnesses to our Christ.

And to the witness of the Spirit and the water comes the witness of the *blood*. Christ came not by water only, as though then for the first time the Son of God came into the man Jesus, and in like manner withdrew again at the time of His sufferings and death, as the old heresy maintained, "but by the water and by *the blood*." He was as much the Christ the Son of God when He died upon the cross, and as really came as our Saviour in that bloodshedding, as He came in His Baptism, for the one was only the anointing for the other. Without a suffering Christ as well as a glorified Christ there is no salvation. And that blood testifies to His Christhood equally with the water of Baptism. Salvation by blood was the only orthodox and accepted doctrine of God's approved people since the day that Adam fell. All preliminary and preparatory dispensations

embodied it as the most vital thing in them. The great principle of the old economy was that "almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb. 9: 18–22); "which was a figure for the time then present" until He should come "who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God," and by His one offering "bare the sins of many," and "by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for us." Had He not then come by blood as well as water, He could never have been the true and availing Christ. But He came by blood as well as water, and thus fulfilled the office of "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." His sufferings and death thus witness that He was and is the Christ.

And a sacrament of that breaking of His body and shedding of His blood for us and for many, for the remission of sins, He also gave to His disciples for their perpetual and universal observance Co-ordinately with Baptism, the Church thus has a further monumental testimony to Jesus as the Christ, the existence and observance of which through all the ages since His crucifixion cannot be accounted for except on the admission that Jesus verily is the Christ, the ever-living Son of the Father.

And with this is also embraced the blood of the martyrs who filled up the remainder of Christ's sufferings in attestation of their testimony that He verily is the Christ and our eternal life. The apostles knew whom they believed, and whom they preached; and their willing acceptance of death rather than

abate a jot or tittle of their testimony joined their blood to that of their Saviour in attestation of His glorious and incontestable Christhood and divine Sonship.

This, then, is the witness which "God hath borne concerning His Son," and which he who rejects must needs make God a liar. Such testimony could not be other than divine. It is the very seal of God, present, continuous, living, potent through all the ages and dispensations of time, and enforcing itself by the most marked and controlling things in all human history. And if there is any testimony among men entitled to credit or competent to beget and assure our belief, there is no instance to bear comparison with the testimony of the Spirit, the water, and the blood given of God to beget and assure our faith that Jesus is the Christ, the true and only Lord and Saviour of the world.

III. What Faith does for its Possessor.

What, then, does the exercise of such faith do for those who possess it?

1. It begets a new and heavenly life in their souls. It is one of the primordial elements and conditions of salvation to "be born again" (John 3 : 3); and here the statement is, that "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ"—believeth it so as to take it home to his soul as the thing on which he builds his hope—"is born [or begotten] of God" (ver. 1). A new principle of life enters into him. He begins to live to a new realm and to another order of things, to which he was dead and unborn before. New ideas

and aims, new hopes and calculations, and a new spirit and style of being, take possession of him, animate him, and sway him. And that new life is a divine life, a begetment of God, a birth from above, an order of things impossible to be reached in any ordinary course of nature. The man becomes in the principle of his being a new creature, and the instrument of his reaching and obtaining this new creation is his living, confident, and practical acceptance of Jesus as his Lord and Saviour; that is to say, his *faith*, his belief of God's testimony that Jesus is the Christ. This makes him live to God as he never did live. His believing becomes to him a veritable new birth into new elements of life, and to an activity and blessedness of existence unknown to him apart from his faith in Jesus as his Lord and Redeemer.

2. It gives him victory over the world; "for whatsoever is begotten of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith."

There be two great kingdoms on earth: the one is from beneath, the other is from above. Into the one we are born; into the other we cannot enter except as we are "born again." The prince and lord of the one is Satan, and in it he rules and reigns with his falsehoods, deceptions, and minions; the Sovereign and Lord of the other is Christ, who therein rules and reigns over the willing subjects of His grace, and ever ministers for their final salvation and glory. Between these two kingdoms there is nothing in common. To be in the one is to be sep-

arated and expatriated from the other. And as faith in Christ is the begetment of a new life, and connects the soul with the heavenly kingdom, and renders it a subject of grace and salvation, it at the same time lifts the believer out of Satan's dominion, victor over all its falsities, seductions, and enslaving powers. He is not simply called to do battle in order to get the victory, but *he has it already*, so far as his disenthralment on the one hand and his instatement in a new and heavenly citizenship on the other embody such a victory. He is still in the world, and must daily contend with its temptations, sins, and lies, but he is no longer of it. He has abjured it, escaped from its condemnation, and is no longer governed by it. He is in this world only as a pilgrim and stranger, whose home-interests are elsewhere, whose heart is set and controlled by quite other things than this present world has to offer, and obeys now quite another law of gravitation. Being begotten of God, the world has lost its hold on him, and he lives a life and has his joys and hopes above it and independent of it. In a word, he has got the victory over it; and that victory is his faith, which has transferred him to another kingdom, given him a different Lord, made him part of another system, introduced him into a sublimer fellowship, and created him an heir of a far higher destiny.

3. Moreover, it implants in him the principle of eternal life. That life which is in His Son, God hath given to all them that truly believe on the Son. "He that hath the Son"—has Him in the embrace of a true and living faith—"*hath the life*." It is not

only a thing which he is to get hereafter when this world is over, but he *has it now*. The principle of all that life of glory and blessedness which awaits him in eternity is already present and in living activity in him, even while sojourning in this adverse world. Begotten of God, he is already alive to God and heaven, and all that goes to make up heaven. Those beliefs, aspirations, hopes, aims, and endeavors which stir in his soul and influence his life are present pulsations of all that is yet to come. It is eternal life begun, not only as made over and sealed to him in covenant and promise, but verily rooted and growing in his soul, and potentially fashioning him to the affections, joys, and habitudes of another world.

Let men say of Christians what they will, there is a spirit of life and power in them which never appears in other people. There is something or other that softens their hearts, sobers and steadies their affections, deadens them to earthly allurements, reconciles them to the sorrows and afflictions of life, quiets their fears of death, and comforts and consoles them where all other consolations fail. There is in them a certain dignity and elevation of soul—a freedom from the power of earthly vicissitudes to overcome them—a sweet submissiveness to Providence—a trust and hope and confidence rising above all clouds, pains, and disasters—a leaning in peaceful assurance on a heavenly arm—a going out of the deepest heart toward things not seen as yet, and a light of blessed anticipation in the midst of the densest darkness,—such as we find in no other classes of our race. And if ever the world has witnessed instances of heroic

virtue, moral triumph, and unconquerable superiority to all that earth and time can do to shake the confidence and courage of man, those instances stand as demonstrations of the power of genuine Christian faith. Nature and philosophy can do much, but nothing to rival the heavenly spirit and moral sublimity of those who have learned to believe in Jesus and to take Him to their souls as their Lord and Redeemer. And what thus distinguishes them from all other people is the presence of the sweet powers of the world to come, already begun to be realized even in this life.

The apostle says, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." His changed heart, his altered life, the new animation that has entered into his soul, and the sweet peace that comes to him from his trust in Jesus as his Lord and Saviour, furnish an additional seal of the Spirit to the truth of the Gospel and the reality of God's saving grace. The power which has deadened him to his old carnal life, lifted him out of his former self, and so linked his affections to things above as to make him victor over the world, is the demonstration to him that a new-creating Word has come forth from God, superinducing a new element of being that lives to a supernal realm, and is itself the throbbing of his eternal life.

Dear friends, would you have experience of what it is to be begotten of God, to have the victory over the world, to have eternal life, to know of a surety that your souls are safe? This subject shows where and how it may be secured. It is all given us in

Jesus Christ if we only embrace Him by faith and confide in Him with all the heart as our blessed Lord and Redeemer. Receive, then, the word of God's testimony to this all-glorious Saviour. Rest in Him as the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Whatever may happen to you, be sure to hold on to Him as your hope and your salvation. No one can ever perish who clings to Jesus and His cross. Doubt Him not, doubt in nothing concerning Him that is given in the Scriptures, but venture on Him with full confidence. As the planet holds to and obeys the sun, so hold on to Jesus, and you have the life. You have it in you already. Your very faith is part of it. And because He lives to whom your faith links you, you shall live also; whither He goes you shall follow; where He is, there shall you be; for you are of the system of which He is the living Centre and Sun, and nothing can separate you from sharing His destiny so long as your faith holds on to Him.

Triumphant faith! With step erect
She walks o'er whirlpool waves, and martyr fires,
And depths of darkness, and chaotic voids,
Dissolving worlds, rent heavens, and dying suns;
Yea, and o'er paradises of earth's bliss,
And oceans of earth's gold, and pyramids
And temples of earth's glory; all these she spurns
With feet fire-shod, because her hand is placed
Immovably in God's: her eye doth rest
Unchangeably on His; nor will she stop
Till, having crossed the stormy waves of pain
And fiery trial, she may lay her head
Upon her Father's breast, and take the crown
From Love's rejoicing hand.

Second Sunday after Easter.

1 Pet. 2: 21–25: For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously: who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

ANY of the Jewish Christians who were driven out of their own country on account of their faith in Christ were compelled to seek positions as domestics and servants in the families of the Gentiles as the readiest way of finding the means of subsistence in their poverty and privations. In these strange and trying relations they were much in need of Christian instruction and encouragement. And this the sympathizing and inspired apostle set himself to give them in this Epistle. He also devoted a special section of his letter to those who were obliged to accept these positions of servitude to the heathen, wherein he exhorts them to faithfulness in duty, not only to good, kind, and reasonable masters, but also to the severe and harsh, and directs them patiently to submit to

the hardships attendant upon their situation. And to this special section the text belongs.

The apostle here urges various considerations tc reconcile these sufferers to their lot and to dispose them to patience and fortitude. He reminds them that it is part of our Christian calling to share in the sufferings of our Saviour; that as Christ so meekly and patiently endured for us, we should be willing to endure for Him; that part of the object for which Jesus went through life as He did was to set an example for us to follow; that as our Lord yielded up His life on the cross to atone for our sins and ransom us from condemnation and death, so we are to die to all self-seeking and sin and live in all righteousness; and that, as we have been brought back from our estrangement to the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls, who is anointed and engaged to see to all our wants and interests, it lies in the nature of our blessed relation to Him gratefully and hopefully to surrender ourselves to His will in full confidence that all will come right in the end.

But without dwelling in detail upon these several items, I find embodied in them three prominent thoughts to which I propose to direct attention:

I. That Man needs a Guardian;
II. That Man's true Guardian is Christ;
III. That Man must accept Christ's Guardianship.

And may the God of all consolation direct your hearts and mine into a right understanding of His holy truth!

I. Man needs a Guardian.

The apostle takes up a figure, very common in the Scriptures, which compares men to sheep—weak, helpless, defenceless, and unable to live and thrive without some one to oversee, guide, and keep them. It is also a true comparison. "Nature, left to herself and unassisted by divine teachings, certainly wanders into mazes of perplexity, involves herself in error and blindness, and becomes the victim of folly, full of all sorts of superstition." All history is proof of this. Nature can teach us much, and may be a sufficient guide in some things, but its light does not extend far. It is not in mere human wisdom to conduct us to the proper end of our being, to secure for us even our highest earthly good, and still less to give us hope and happiness for the world to come. Reason and conscience can give us some idea of accountability to a superior power, and suggest to us many ideas of duty and right in our earthly relations; but they can give us no certainty in regard to what is most important for us to know, and cannot assure us respecting that good which should be the chief pursuit of man. And with such weakness and darkness cleaving to our very nature we are necessarily like mariners on a boundless sea, without chart or compass or ability to read the stars, ever drifting we know not whither, and in perpetual dread of disaster which we know not how to escape —like helpless and defenceless sheep scattered and lost in the wilds, not knowing where to look for security, and liable at any moment to be torn to pieces by savage beasts. We need instruction and enlight-

enment from some one who knows and can lead us in safety. We must have a guide, a guardian, an overseer, a shepherd for our souls.

Accordingly, mankind in all ages have ever been searching and inquiring for competent instructors and leaders around whom to rally. What people call priestcraft and kingcraft is simply the outcropping of the felt want for somebody to lead, somebody to trust in, somebody to look to for guidance and guardianship. It is not mere wilful domination over the personal rights and independence of men, but an outgrowth of the common sense of mortals that they must have help. Looking at human history, we may well say that it is the nature of men to rally around leaders, priests, prophets, heroes, kings, and great ones, in hope to find in them the help they feel to be necessary for the afflicted world. Perhaps there is no one living who does not take to some teacher, leader, model, or guide, by whom he is influenced. Somebody has said something or assumed an attitude or position which commends itself to the taste and temper of others, and so it is approved and accepted, and admiring discipleship and following are the result in spite of everything. A completely and thoroughly original and independent man does not exist. The world in every department is full of conventionalities, traditions, and floating opinions and beliefs, and people act on them and fashion their thinking to them, and cannot avoid so doing. And those who claim to disregard and despise the common ways in a vast number of things still follow some lead or tradition, even in their determination not to be led.

It lies in the nature of sheep to have a shepherd; and so it lies in the nature of man to have a guardian and guide. The human soul was made to be taught, instructed, and led. It never gets done learning or beyond dependence on somebody to teach, inform, and direct it. Of itself it can never come to such a state of perfectness as to need no further light and knowledge. At best, it still has questions to ask, uncertainties to solve, and occasion for a superior wisdom to its own. And when we consider the limits by which it is hemmed in on every side, and compare its best knowledge with the vast realm of things of which it can think but knows nothing, how much does man appear like a child dropped in some vast wilderness, where it dreams of home and friends and happiness, but can neither guess nor find the way to them without some superior wisdom to come to its help and lead it forth to what it craves!

And especially when it comes to the great questions concerning God and the soul, wherewithal a man shall come before the Lord, how find adequate peace against the accusations of a guilty conscience and the dread of eternal retribution, and what to count on as the outcome of this tangled skein of human life, there is nothing but mysterious doubt and darkness without some teacher come from God. Nor is there any want in humanity so urgent as the need of some adequate spiritual guide and guardian superior to itself, if ever the existence of man is to become to him a lasting satisfaction and a blessedness.

But the good God who made us and has placed us in this world has not failed to provide for us the sort of Helper we need.

II. Christ is Man's true Guardian.

This is a great thing to say. Next to the work of creating man is that of delivering him from the effects of his fall. To meet the necessities of his sinful, alienated, perverse, and benighted condition, to supply his spiritual wants, and to bring him up to the true good and glory for which he is capacitated, is even a greater work than his creation. It demands equal wisdom and power, and it involves far more costly and wide-ranging expedients. It requires all the qualities of the original Creator and others beside. Perhaps there is not another work possible in the universe that calls for so much or is so difficult to achieve. To accomplish it there needs to be knowledge without limit, affection the most tender and inexhaustible, forbearance infinite, compassion unexampled, charms supremely attractive, power without bounds and extending over all creatures, a spirit of self-sacrifice to accept immeasureable humiliation and the deepest horrors of woe for the good of others, and a moral spotlessness and perfection as pure as heaven itself. Weakness or defect in any of these particulars would disable the whole undertaking. It is therefore a great and tremendous affirmation to say that Jesus Christ is the true Guide and Guardian for the bringing of souls to eternal life and glory.

But this is exactly what the Scriptures everywhere

say of Him. His own sublime proposal of Himself to the poor afflicted children of men is: "I am the Good Shepherd. All that ever came before Me are thieves and robbers. The Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep. I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand." (See John 10.)

Professions so lofty and proposals so great never came from any other being upon this earth. With all the pretensions of this world's wise and great and mighty, none in their wildest moods ever dared to put forth such claims or make such pledges and promises. Looking at them as they stand written, we must conclude either that He was a madman or that He was a God. And yet with these professions, claims, and offers He unmistakably presents Himself to our sorrowing and helpless race. If He ever lived or ever spoke at all, this is what He said and continues to say, and pledges all the eternal powers to substantiate and fulfil. And the mere fact of such a transcendent presentation, made in solemn and intelligent seriousness, is of itself enough to startle the world and to command the attention of every soul.

But the presentation is at the same time backed, sustained, and borne out by the actual presence and fulfilment of every conceivable requisite to what is proposed.

Christ has the needful knowledge, "for it pleased

the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell," and in Him "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 1 : 19; 2 : 3). He understands human nature and its wants, "and needed not that any should testify of man; for He knew what was in man" (John 2 : 24, 25). Those who had most to do with Him in His earthly life were perfectly convinced that He knew all things. What no mortal knew of the Father, He knew and could tell; and all things, whether belonging to time or eternity, are ever naked and open to His eyes.

Christ also has the requisite sympathy, brotherly affection, and loving tenderness, for He became partaker of our own flesh and blood. He took on Him not the nature[1] of angels, but the nature of man. Humanity in its truest and highest bloom was His. It behooved Him in all things to be made like unto us—imperfection and sin alone excepted—that He might be to us a merciful and faithful High Priest. He suffered temptation that He might succor the tempted; He was compassed by infirmity that He might have compassion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way; He became a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief that He might the more truly enter into our trials and our needs.

He also has the required gentleness, meekness, and forbearance; for the bruised reed He will not break, and the smoking wick, however offensive, He is willing to endure. No one on earth met with "such contradiction of sinners" as He, but no one ever bore it with more patient and untiring meekness. "When He was reviled, He reviled not again;

when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously." He was oppressed and afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth. He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, but submitted in silence, yielded Himself to all the cruelties of His foes, and uncomplainingly laid down His life praying for His murderers, that sin might be cancelled, hearts melted, and souls saved.

He likewise has the necessary power; for "all things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made" (John 1 : 3). Even in His office and attitude of Mediator all power is given unto Him in heaven and on earth, whereby He is "able to subdue all things unto Himself." He is the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending, the Lord, which is and which was and which is to come, *the Almighty*, and hath the keys of death and of hell (Rev. 1).

In self-sacrifice and devotion the universe has never seen another such an instance as that which He has shown. Such depths of condescension, such extremities of woe, such fervency of unfaltering zeal —all for the recovery of the unworthy and the lost —have never been but in Him. Though in the form of God, and thinking it no robbery to be equal with God, He made Himself of no reputation, emptied Himself of His rightful claims, took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and, being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. In this mysterious history what is there of glory that was not parted with?

what depth of humiliation that was not submitted to? what burden of woe that was not assumed? what possible sacrifice that was not voluntarily made?—just that man might have redemption! Yea, "He His own Self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness."

And, with all, He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." As the text affirms, "He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth." At the end of a life of unexampled trial and temptation He could stand up in the face of all His enemies and triumphantly ask, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" The man who betrayed Him confessed with horror that he had betrayed innocent blood. The judge who gave Him up to execution washed his hands in testimony that he could find no fault in Him. The centurion who had command of His execution stood trembling by His cross, and said, "Truly this was the Son of God." And after He was dead and buried He was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1 : 4). Nay, appearing in heaven as the Lamb that was slain, the gold-crowned elders and the living ones prostrate themselves before Him with new songs to His sublime worthiness, while all the myriad hosts of angels and every creature in heaven join in the adoring ascription of blessing and honor and glory and power unto the Lamb for ever and ever coequally with Him who sitteth upon the throne.

And with these sublime qualifications for the work He is also divinely chosen and consecrated to perform it. "Called of God an High Priest after the order of Melchisedek," He was set apart to His office "not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life," and with the very oath of God that, as "the Captain of salvation" made perfect through sufferings, He might bring many sons unto glory. He is called *the Christ*, because He is the Anointed and Sent of God; and He is named *Jesus*, because His appointed work is "to save His people from their sins." God hath foreordained Him to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins (Rom. 3 : 25); "wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7 : 25). Yea, "Him hath God the Father sealed" (John 6 : 27)—sealed to be the Guardian and Saviour of men.

And the work to which God hath appointed Him, and for which He is so wonderfully qualified, He has accepted and undertaken. Commissioned from the throne, His proclamation was, "Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me) to do Thy will, O God" (Heb. 10 : 7). Even in the hour of dreadful agony, with the awful burden of the world's guilt laid upon Him, dripping with bloody sweat over the cup given Him to drink, and praying that if possible that cup might pass from Him, He still stood firm to the purpose for which He came, and submissively said, "Not My will, O Father, but

Thine be done." To the last and lowest dregs of woe "He was faithful to Him that appointed Him" (Heb. 3 : 2). And so "when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears, He became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him" (Heb. 5 : 7–9).

Thus, then, is Jesus Christ the Shepherd and Bishop of souls—the qualified, appointed, and ever-living Guide and Guardian of the lost and bewildered children of men. Thanks be to God for such a Lord and Saviour!

But to be helped and saved by Him,

III. Man must Accept Christ's Guardianship.

The text speaks of a state of estrangement and straying in which these suffering Christians once were. There was a time when they had no adequate guide and guardian. They were Jews, and knew something of God and His worship, but, like many others, they were without faith in Him. The life of true religion, even among the chosen people, had dwindled down to so low an ebb that there was not much left but dry subtleties and lifeless forms, which had no power to awaken and enlist the soul. Here and there some good men and women appeared, but for the most part spiritual life was dead, and the people had drifted into all sorts of ill ways, until the preaching of John began to recall the public mind to the ancient faith, and the voice of Christ and His apostles was heard proclaiming the glad tidings of the Gospel.

But a new light had now arisen. The Christ had

come. The wonderful demonstrations of His life, death, and resurrection had been completed. The Holy Ghost had been poured out. The Church of Christ had been constituted. Jesus and the resurrection were being heralded abroad as the world's hope. Men were being called upon to repent, to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus for the remission of sins, to put their trust and confidence in the once-crucified but now risen and glorified Redeemer, and to keep themselves obediently to Him as the true Shepherd and Bishop of their souls. And these people with others were convinced and moved by these teachings. They accepted and believed in Jesus as the Messiah, and set themselves to obey and follow Him as their Lord and Saviour. Coming to Him as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious, they also as living stones were builded upon Him as part of a spiritual house and holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God. They had been as sheep going astray; they were now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls.

And this is just what is required of every one of us in order to enjoy the saving guidance and guardianship of Jesus. In the course of nature "all we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way." But a new and heavenly Word has come to us. It is the Word of the Gospel of Christ, "the Word of faith which we preach." It is the Word which bringeth salvation, that publisheth peace. It is the Word which tells of a Saviour come—a Saviour wounded for our transgressions

and bruised for our iniquities—a Saviour who nailed our condemnation to His cross, and ever lives to guide and guard and help us unto everlasting life and glory—a Saviour able and willing to save all them that come unto Him and obediently trust in Him. It is the Word of gracious promise from heaven to each: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Rom. 10:9). It is the Word which places before us the constituted Guide and Guardian of erring and helpless men, the only true and availing Shepherd and Bishop of souls. And the great practical question now is whether we will accept and take Him or not.

Many of us, I trust, have thus accepted and embraced Him as our Lord and Saviour. We have been hearing and learning of Him from our earliest childhood. We have been marked as His by the waters of Baptism. We are called after His name. We are accustomed to occupy place in the assemblies for His worship. We say the Creed which expresses faith in Him as the GOD-MAN, the only Lord and Redeemer, who suffered for our sins and ever lives in glorious power and majesty to guide, protect, and save all who put their trust in Him. We appear at the table which He has ordained for the showing forth of His death as our propitiation, and for the impartation of Himself as the nutriment of our souls and bodies unto eternal life. In our trials and sorrows we look up to Him as our Helper, and trust in His merciful goodness and grace to deliver us. As

we contemplate the grave and the coming eternity, our eyes look to Him to bring us safely through to the heavenly kingdom. In all our perplexities, weaknesses, and dangers we turn to His Word, call to mind His precious promises, and comfort ourselves with the thought that our good and blessed Saviour reigns, that His eye is on us, that His tender love is unfailing, and that He will make plain all that is so dark and oppressive to us now, and that He will save us in the end. And, thus building ourselves up upon Him as our precious Lord and trust, in so far as there is any heart-reality in what we profess and do in these things, we know experimentally what it is to have "returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls."

And where there is such a taking and acceptance of Christ as our Guide and Guardian the apostle mentions it as a matter of great comfort and satisfaction. Such people are in their right place. They have reached a state of exalted beatitude which renders every ill condition in other respects of very trifling account. What is earthly servitude and sorrow under the care and dominion of such a Lord?

Poets and artists and orators have tasked their highest powers to portray the peaceful beauty and sacredness imaged in pastoral scenes. Contemplate that meek and innocent flock! How lovingly and trustfully they follow their shepherd, whose life is consecrated to their good, whose voice they know, whose watchful care is over them by day and by night, who leadeth them into green pastures and beside the still waters! How happy are they under his oversight

and directions! How free from all care and danger! Here are so many elements of attractiveness, so harmoniously blended and so tender in details, that the picture speaks to the heart, kindles the emotions, and captivates the soul with ideas of comfort, goodness, security, plenty, and peace. But the highest reality is in those who were as sheep going astray, but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls. The sweet singer of Israel could indite no higher, no sweeter song, for himself or any other, than that which breaks out in the psalm of faith: "*The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want.*" And such is the tranquil blessedness of all who do truly and obediently accept the Lord Jesus as their Shepherd, Guardian, and Trust.

Are there any among us, then, who have not thus returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of souls? It is time they should give over their straying. The night is coming and the perils are great and terrible. The only safety is in the guardianship of Jesus. Unwashed in His blood, there is no more sacrifice for sin. Apart from Him, there is no way, no truth, no life. Refusing His instructions and His lead, there can come only the blackness of darkness for ever. Without His guardian care and protection the soul must ever want and wander, and never find its goal. But the Son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost. To every tired, torn, hungry, and perishing one, He stretches out His hand and says, "*Come unto Me, and I will give you rest.*" Wide open are His gracious arms to take up even the weakest and most disabled, to bear them upon

His ample bosom, to heal their wounds, quiet their fears, and bring them in peace to His heavenly fold.

Child of sin and sorrow, wilt thou not hear His voice? Look into His eye and see how tenderly He loves thee, and how willingly He would become thine everlasting Deliverer. Let go thy doubts, mistrusts, and unbelief, and be sure that thy salvation is in Him. As thy soul sighs for the better life, surrender thyself to Him in humble and trustful obedience, and take thy place in that gathered flock to which it is the Father's good pleasure to give the kingdom. Thy help, thy strength, thy sufficiency thou wilt find complete in Him.

He is a path, if any be misled;
He is a robe, if any naked be;
If any chance to hunger, He is bread;
If any be a bondman, He sets free;
If any be but weak, how strong is He!
To dead men, life He is; to sick men, health;
To blind men, sight; and to the needy, wealth.

Third Sunday after Easter.

1 Pet. 2 : 11–20: Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evil-doers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well.

For so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: as free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.

Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.

Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.

For this is thank-worthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.

For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.

IN the world, but not of it, gives the substance of this text, in so far as it describes the estate of a Christian during his earthly life. It is said of the ancient patriarchs that they saw the promises afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, "and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Heb. 11 : 13). And it is the same with the people

of God in every age. The description is peculiarly significant.

A *stranger* is a foreigner to those among whom he is. He has a home to which he belongs, but not there. Kindly as he may be treated, he is a member of another community—a mere guest who has no home-part in the affairs of those by whom he is surrounded. He is with them, but he is not of them. His feelings, language, habits, interests, and true fellowship pertain to a different locality. As Jews, these people to whom Peter was writing were absent from their own land, having neither part nor lot with the heathen around them; and as Christians, this was true of them in a still higher sense. The people of God are nowhere properly at home in this present world. Its ways and spirit are not theirs. They "only sojourn here." They belong to another community—to a kingdom which has its metropolis and centre in another world. They are influenced by other sympathies and wear the marks and manners of other training. They are *strangers* in the earth.

A *pilgrim* is one on a journey. He is not simply a stranger, but one who is trying to make his way to his own true home. He is a traveller passing through a foreign country to reach his distant friends in his own city. He is a passenger, one who is only in temporary contact with the populations through which he is moving. If he stops and tarries, it is only "for a night," for a little refreshment, that he may press forward with the greater vigor. The attractions which govern his movements and the affections which stir in his heart are from afar. And this

is particularly the character of a Christian. He is a traveller. He is on his way to a home and fatherland in heaven. He is in the world, but not of it. His heart is on things above, not on things on the earth. He is a mere passenger to a better realm. He is *a pilgrim* here.

There is, then, nothing specially local or circumscribed in the text. It applies to *us* as well as to the dispersed believers of the apostle's time. It gives the mind of God with reference to our estate and duty the same as in their case. Our calling is the same; our relation to this world is the same; our hopes and aims are the same. And what was true of their situation and of the style of life they were to maintain is equally true in our case. *In the world, but not of it*, is the theme which stands out in every line and in every word. In this light, therefore, let us consider the apostolic presentation, earnestly seeking to profit by what the Holy Ghost doth here signify.

In the world, but not of it:

I. Sharing its Joys and Sorrows, but Avoiding its Lusts.

It is not the meaning of the apostle that in abstaining from fleshly lusts we are to let go everything gratifying to the eye or pleasant to the nature with which God has endowed us. The sunshine and showers and genial breezes and cheering outlooks of a country are enjoyable to passing travellers and pilgrim strangers, as well as to natives, citizens, and permanent dwellers. It is neither the office nor in-

tent of true Christian piety to kill out of us all the comforts and pleasures of life, but only to separate us from its vanities and corruptions and from the sacrifice of the soul to the service of the body. Religion is not meant to cut us off from society or to divorce us from the warmths, affections, and proper pleasures of our being. We are not called to mutilate ourselves or to contradict and extinguish the proper susceptibilities and feelings which God has given us. We are to "use this world as not abusing it." Piety is not a mere unbending solemnity or sombreness which discards everything sunny and glad. Jesus demands of us nothing morbid, nothing morose, nothing incompatible with the highest possible earthly good. Godliness is not a leaden thing which stifles every gush of natural feeling, or transmutes life into a stupid monotony or stolid gravity having neither zest, light, nor love.

The Gospel does not demand of us to cease to be men, but would make us men indeed—rational, intelligent, right-feeling, and proper men, with willing and glad hearts bearing, and doing, and appropriating whatever pertains to a perfect manhood and true human life. Even though we be strangers and pilgrims here, absent from home and on our way to another country, we are not therefore to be insensible to what happens us on the way, whether glad or sad, prosperous or adverse. If there is sunshine on our path, we are to rejoice in it. If flowers spring up by the wayside, we are not forbidden to pluck them and pin them to our breasts. If scenes of beauty open to our eyes, it is but fitting that we

should look and drink in the pleasant sight. If the birds sing in the branches, what is to hinder us from listening to their happy melody? If the brooks leap and sparkle and laugh by the highway, who shall forbid us to bow down and refresh our thirsty lips and regale ourselves with their glad waters? If a fellow-traveller falls in with us on the way, why shall we not be civil to him and walk with him in good fellowship as long as he continues on our road.

And as with the favorable things, so with the unfavorable. If we come to mountain-steeps, why shall we not take more time for their ascent? If the rays of the sun are oppressive, who shall forbid us to avail ourselves of the shade? If the storm gathers over us, what is to prevent our turning in under the proffered shelter? And when the night-time draws on, surely it is lawful and right to inquire for the inn where we may eat and rest for the next day's journey.

There is much in this world for the Christian to enjoy, as well as much for him to suffer; but in neither case is he required to be a stoic or a man of stone. If he has cause for gladness he may be glad, and if he has cause for tears he may weep. Only must he not forget that he is a stranger and a pilgrim, and be always careful to conduct himself as such. He must not become so enamored with earth's sunshine, flowers, landscapes, birds, brooks, and companionships as to lose sight of that "better country," his true Fatherland, to which he professes to be journeying. Neither must he become so dis-

heartened, discouraged, and dismayed by earth's trying ascents, oppressive heat, beating tempests, and dark nights as to relinquish his course or to become content with this world's carnal ease. The traveller never stops to attach himself to the country through which he is passing. Much as he may admire and enjoy it, his heart is ever on his home. Gratefully as he may avail himself of its good things, he never esteems them so good as to make him say, "Here will I dwell." Nor will he give up his homeward pilgrimage because of difficulties, trials, or hindrances which may beset his way.

This, then, is what the apostle asks of us in the text. We have here no continuing city. We are strangers and pilgrims on the earth; and as strangers and pilgrims we are not to give place to lusts and affections which would divert us from our journey or the one great object of our pursuit. Be our joys or sorrows what they may, the attractions of the one and the repulsions of the other, both together, are not to weigh a feather's weight against the one all-absorbing aim to reach the better land. If our earthly estate is a happy one, we may enjoy it and thank God for it, but as strangers and pilgrims we are not to set our hearts on it. It must soon pass away. If it does not leave us, we must soon leave it. We cannot take it with us, neither do we need it in that happier home above. We are not, therefore, to link our affections to it, as if we could not do without it or as if our proper life consisted in it. If we have it, it is good, but it must not be allowed to detain or restrain us from the pursuit of

something "far better." And if we have it not, we are not to consider ourselves unhappy or unfortunate.

It is astonishing also how a thorough realization that we are only pilgrims and strangers here relaxes the hold of the world and its vanities and lusts. If we have learned to lift up our eyes in genuine trust in God's word, and to say,

> Yonder's my house and portion fair—
> My treasure and my heart are there,
> And my abiding home,

it will matter but little to us for the short time we have to spend on earth whether we be so many dollars richer or poorer or have so many comforts less or more. It is a satisfaction to a traveller to have a good and comfortable lodging-place for the night; but if it is indifferent, or even incommodious, he makes but little of it one way or the other. It is only for a night. Another night, or after a few more days of weariness and inconvenience, he will be in his own blessed home in his Father's house. When once there, for ever happy in the imperishable satisfactions of heaven, he will not regret, nor hardly remember, the little difference between him and others in the accommodations enjoyed in passing through this world. And with all this printed and living in his heart he feels but little impulse to join in the scrambles for earthly goods and pleasures, readily abstains from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, and proves, in the whole temper of his life, that *though in the world he is not of it.*

II. In Contact with its Sins, but not Participant in its Wickedness.

What saith the apostle?—"Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that whereas they speak evil against you as evil-doers, they may *by your good works*, which they shall behold, glorify God."

When Peter wrote these words those whom he addressed were in the midst of a world lying in the bosom of the Wicked One. Their eyes, their ears, their hands, were daily and hourly full of proofs that they were not yet in heaven, but in a wicked world, tossed hither and thither amid the floods of reigning ungodliness and corruption. Everywhere the temples of idolatry stood before them and altars bloody with sacrifices to devils. Everywhere evil reigned.

Nor is it much different now, even in so-called Christendom itself. A true Christian is still surrounded with a reigning heathenism. The ways and fashions and maxims of the common world—the spirit that governs in its trade, in its literature, in its philosophy, in its politics, and even in its religion—the whole temper and course of things about us from the counting-room to the sanctuary, and from the street-gutters to the church-pews—tell and smell of what is "earthly, sensual, devilish." The altars and temples of worldly lust, sensuality, pride, and all forms of gilded ungodliness and crime are more numerous than the churches; and the churches themselves sometimes are mere theatres of fashion, consecrated play-houses, and religious market-places, where sacred things are huckstered for worldly glory.

Not one came to church from any distance to-day but passed more temples of Bacchus, houses of debauchery, and sights of sin than places of worship and scenes of Christian devotion. We may dream and prate of the glories, the enlightenment, the progress, the piety, of this nineteenth century, and call it the millennial dawn; but everything about us proves the mass of the world to be, what it always has been, heathen, idolatrous, and under the dominion of the devil. Every true believer on earth is yet in contact with reigning impiety and sin. The world is still the depraved and God-defiant world that it was in every age, and always will be till the eternal King comes to judge it for its unrighteousness.

But, though in contact with the world's wickedness, a true Christian takes no part in that wickedness. He has his conversation *honest*—beautiful, proper, becoming—among the heathen. In modern phrase, his walk is virtuous, his behavior good, his manner of life commendable to the approbation of good men. The face which he presents to the world is the true exemplification of what he professes and believes.

True Christians are "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people," showing forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into His marvellous light (1 Pet. 2: 9). They no longer walk in "lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries." They run not with the world "to the same excess of riot." Hence they are credited with affected singularities, accounted a strange set,

ill-esteemed and ill-spoken of. But what the sensual world charges to their discredit is their highest glory. They *are* a singular people. It is part of their calling to be such. It is but the honest filling out of their profession, a trait of their heavenly citizenship, to maintain that very course of life which is so unlovely in unsanctified eyes. What need Daniel care for the heathen plottings and accusations of Babylon's presidents or the unprincipled decrees of Babylon's king? It is his business to pray on, and to kneel at his window, looking toward Jerusalem, as he was wont. He was *in* Babylon, but *not of* Babylon. He belonged to a different people; he was the servant of another God. And it was what became him, a thing of heroic beauty and glory, a means of transcendent victory, to pray on, as aforetime, though the lions should crunch his bones. "Great Babylon" with all its riches and power was but a cipher to that heavenly home—the New Jerusalem.

And so the apostle desired his fellow-pilgrims to walk—in contact with earth's wickedness indeed, but taking no part in it.

III. An Offence to its Population, but a Light of God to their Souls.

Old countries, fixed and settled in their ways and jealous of their fashions and possessions, generally do not much like the presence of those who belong to another with different ideas and a different civilization. They laugh at them, they mock them, and are apt to wish for Chinese walls or rigid laws to

keep all foreigners out. And so true Christians are never welcome to the tastes, likes, and friendships of carnal and self-seeking man. The restraints and disabilities imposed by their ideas and principles are what the world hates, derides, and rebels against. If fellowship with the people of God were association with small-pox patients or with people affected with some contagious pest, it could not be more abhorred and avoided than it really is by hundreds and thousands among whom we live and move. Though they can sustain no charges against the Church, and cannot deny her princely beauty, yet to take up fellowship and companionship with her and her ways and spirit is to them the last thing and utterly repulsive to them. The mouth of the idolatrous and wicked world is ever open to speak ill of Christians and to hold them at a long distance off, as if they were a pestiferous set of evil-doers. Let become of them what may, the world wishes to have nothing to do with them, except as it may use them for its own ends and selfish purposes. All this we must needs bear, for we and our ways, faith, and manner of life do not suit the carnal heart and cannot be conformed to this world.

But the presence of Christians is necessary, nevertheless. They are the salt of the earth, without which everything would go to putrefaction and rot down. It is the fact that the world itself stands for their sake, and but for their presence in it, and the recovery of some through their testimony and endeavors, judgment would certainly break in and nothing could continue for a single day or hour.

But for the light and testimony which Christians uphold and give forth in the world, how could it ever come to the knowledge of the truth or find the way to salvation and heaven? The Church is everywhere represented as God's candlestick, the pillar and pedestal of the truth, and Christians and Christian ministers are the stars, the light-bearers, the real illuminators of the world, without whom it would be utter darkness. Strangers and pilgrims as they are, they beam forth the light of God and eternity as they go through the world. They all have lamps, which it is their business to keep trimmed and burning, even the lamps of God's truth, throwing light upon the scenes and populations amid which they move, that those in darkness may behold that light and be led also to glorify God. And it is all the more necessary that we should understand this that we may be faithful in our testimony and true to our duty, for the light of the world must go forth from us.

Thus, then, we are to be in the world, but not of it, demeaning ourselves with reference to it as placed here for the time to witness for God in the midst of a perverse and gainsaying generation.

IV. Obeying its Governments, but maintaining Allegiance to a Higher Lord.

Heathen rulers and oppressive tyrannies held sway over the early Christians. More liberal constitutions now prevail. Christian teachings and principles, and the revulsions of the human soul against tyrannical abridgments of personal rights, have somewhat

modified most of the administrations which now control the civilized world. But such a thing as a truly Christian government, or one administered wholly on the basis of the divine Word, does not exist on earth. Cæsar is a heathen, and always will be as long as this present dispensation lasts. However honest and pious may be the hands that wield the sword of worldly empire, it is still worldly empire, essentially heathenish, and no part or constituent of the kingdom of God. The world-power is a dragon-power, whether in the form of republics, monarchies, or mixed. It may be gold in Nebuchadnezzar, silver in Cyrus, brass in Alexander, iron in Cæsar, or clay and iron combined in the rule of modern times, but it is with all an earthly fabric, destined to be crushed to dust and scattered to the winds before the supernal dominion of the Father and the Son shall clothe this earth with righteousness and peace. Worldly power is a wild beast, which God for the time permits and uses, but unclean and ever acting out its own ferocity whatever variations of form it may assume. Now it may be a winged lion, now a devouring bear, now a treacherous leopard, now a nondescript with teeth of iron, claws of brass, horns by the half score, "dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly;" but always it is an earthly and savage beast. This is the picture of it as foreshown in the prophecies of God in relation to His people from Nebuchadnezzar to the day of judgment. We may amuse ourselves with the fiction of Christian laws and Christian governments, but they *are not*, and will never be, in the world

which now is. With all the many blessings which come to us in God's providence from civil authority, the impossibility of preserving social order without it, and the fact that there is divine right for its existence, Satan has so wormed himself into all the politics and administrations of this world that they everywhere savor of him, and are all destined to be swept clean out of the earth with all else that pertains to his infernal usurpation.

But for the present these "ordinances of man"—kings, governors, civil powers—exist and must exist. Christians have to do with them while in this world as well as any others. Nor is it any part of a Christian's duty to ignore them, much less to try to unmake and overthrow them. How, then, are we to conduct ourselves in relation to these powers? The text gives the answer: "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or unto governors as unto them that are sent by Him for the punishment of evil-doers and for the praise of them that do well; for so is the will of God."

As children of God earthly authorities have no right to command us; but our sonship is not yet come to full age, and so we are yet under tutors and governors. We are still in the present world, and must submit to its laws and authorities for the Lord's sake, as a matter of duty to Him, till He sees fit to exempt us from this foreign rule. Christians have no business with nihilists, dynamiters, and revolutionists. Let the character of the government be what it may, the true Christian spirit is peaceably

to obey and submit to the laws. To try to overthrow governments or to set up rebellion against the constituted authorities is no more our business here than it was the business of Jesus to make war against the government of Rome. Though we be the children of the King of kings and the Lord of lords, it is not yet our time to reign. Though belonging to the blood-royal of heaven, whom no dragon-power has any authority to command, we are now pilgrims and strangers in this foreign territory, and we must for the time respect its government and act the part of submission and peace. Though the government be godless, usurped, and never so tyrannical, the fact that it exists and that God has put us here is enough for us to be submissive to it, trusting all to our true and rightful King, who has His own time and way for our deliverance and for dealing with usurpers and tyrants. As we are to make to ourselves friends by means of the Mammon of unrighteousness, so we are to show our fealty to Jesus by submission to the governments under which we sojourn, obeying the laws of earthly rule in dutifulness to a far higher Lord—free, but not using our liberty—*in the world, but not of it.*

Thus, then, are we to sustain the character of "strangers and pilgrims" in this world, sharing its joys and sorrows, but avoiding its lusts; in contact with its sins, but not participant in its wickedness; an offence to its population, but a light of God to their souls; obeying its governments, but maintaining allegiance to a higher Lord.

And now, fellow-pilgrims, what have we been

doing in this calm and peaceful hour? We turned in hither for a little spiritual repose and a little talk together about our common journey. This house, thank God! is one of those pleasant little oases in the desert into which souls may turn for a little comfort and refreshing in their heavenward pilgrimage. By God's grace it is a sacred palm-shade where in our oft weariness we may sit down for an hour and hear of the better land, and think of the Golden City, and drink of Siloa's waters, and take a little of the heavenly food, that we may the better go forward in what yet remains of our journey. And this has been our experience again to-day. Happy are we, and grateful for the privilege. But we cannot tarry. The journey is before us. We must take up the traveller's staff and bundle and move on, we know not through what scenes. This only are we sure of: that Jesus leads the way, that he will not leave us comfortless, and that a glorious home, fitted up by him, awaits us at the journey's end.

For that, then, let us on, never stopping, never tarrying, till the happy ones there shall meet and greet us with their welcomes and we be pilgrims and strangers no more.

END OF VOLUME I.

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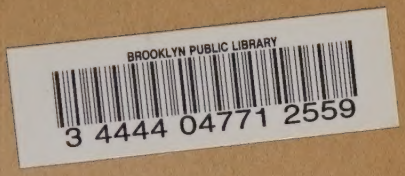
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